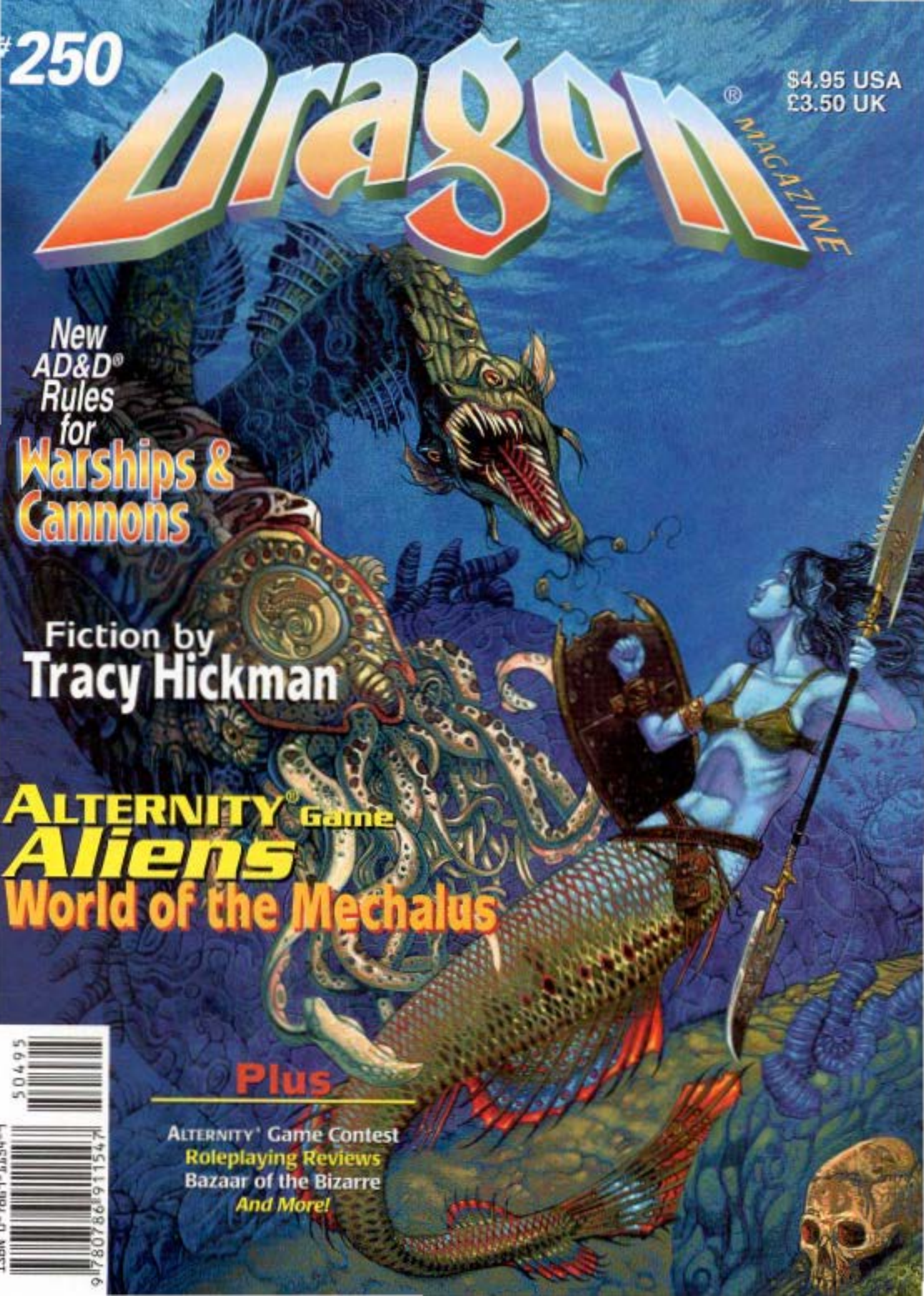
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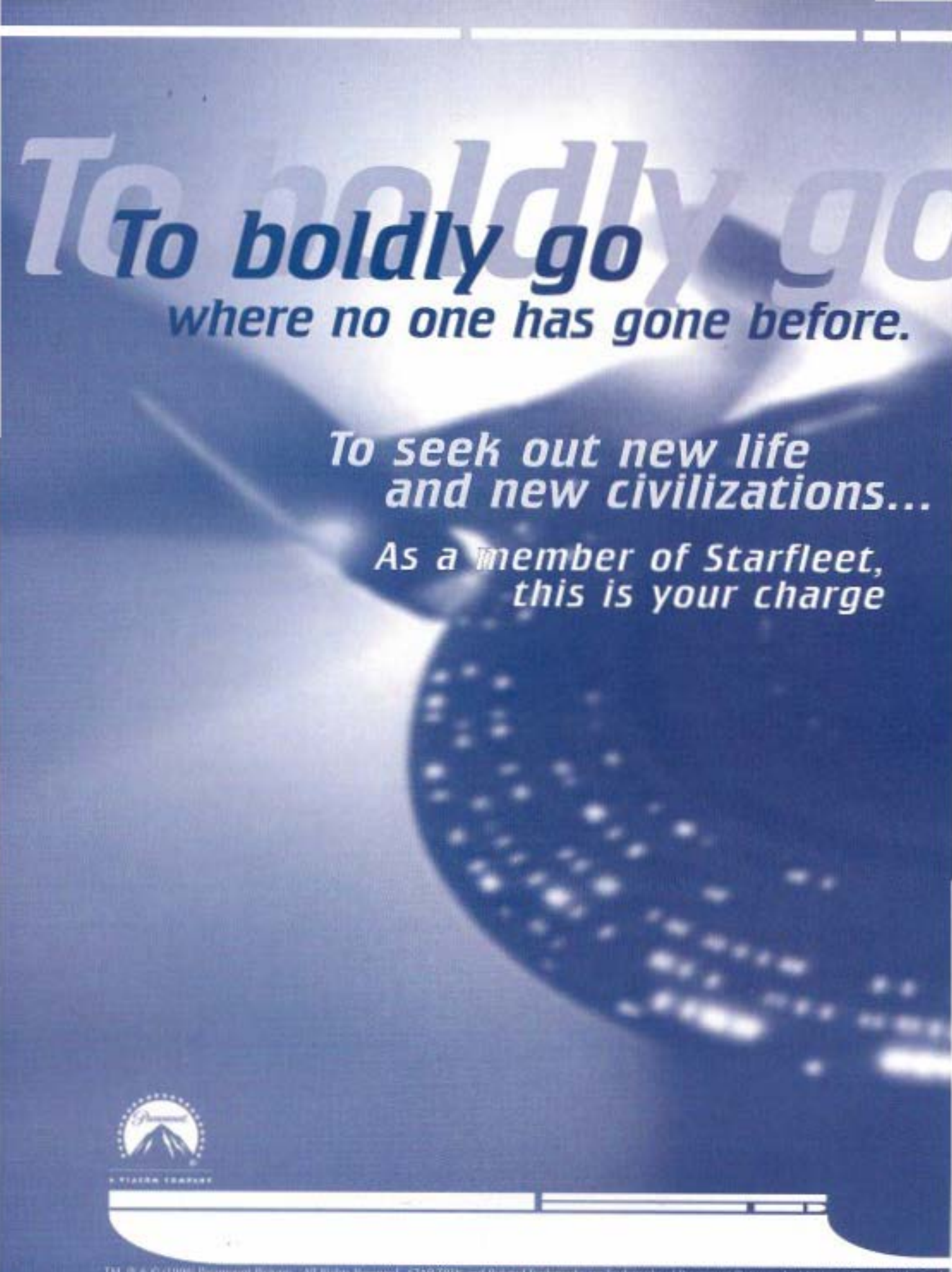
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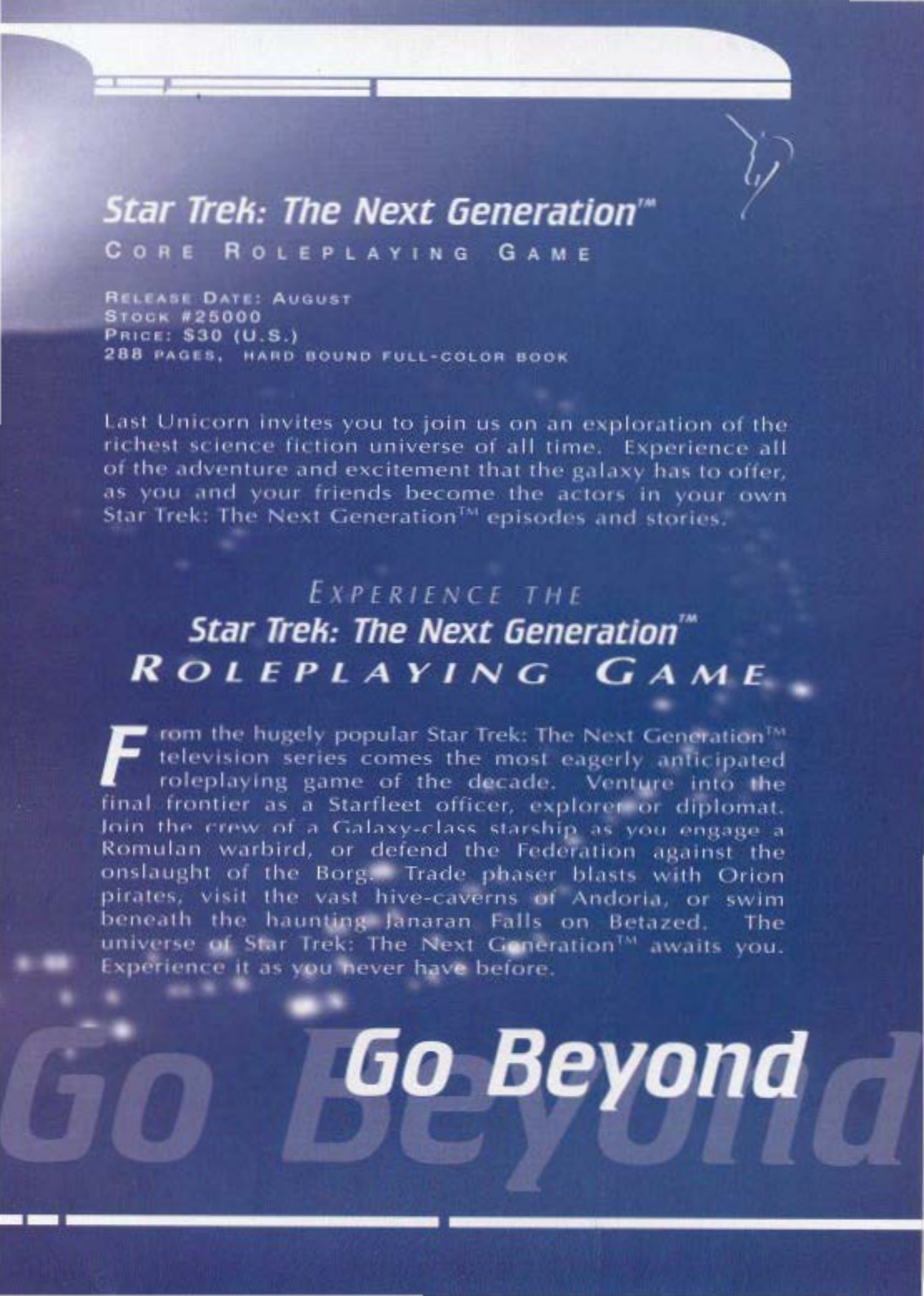
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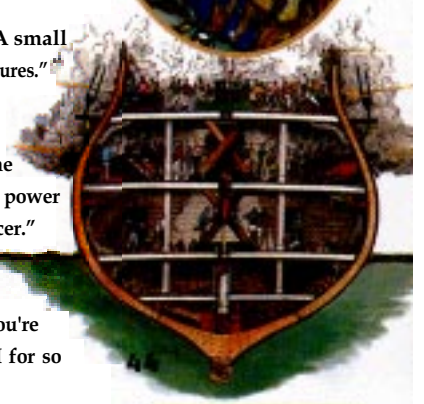

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ON THE COVER

Mark Nelson graces our cover with his vision of a fabulous undersea encounter.

The Wyrm's Turn™

250

Once every 50 issues, the editor of *DRAGON Magazine* takes a moment to reflect on his tenure on the staff. That makes things difficult for me, because I've been the editor for only 20 issues, and I've been at TSR for only five years. And every time I have something interesting to say about that time here, I tend to tell you. Right here.

It occurs to me, however, that there's at least one topic that we never address in the editorial, and perhaps for good reason. But what the heck? We're friends, right? I've got a little confession for you.

For the past couple of years, the mail you have been sending us has been so overwhelmingly positive that all the kind words have threatened to go to our heads. That might not seem very important in, say, Chris's case, but Jesse and I feel bad about it when we think we've gotten cocky. We want to stay as humble as it takes to keep improving. So, in the continuing effort to remain humble, I'd like to take this moment to reflect on some of the biggest mistakes we editors have made during the 250-issue life of *DRAGON Magazine.*

Even Kim Mohan, a true veteran of TSR and *DRAGON Magazine,* has made a memorable error or two. After searching through our library to refresh his memory (he's getting on in years, you know), he reminisced about Tom Wham's superlative *Planet Busters* game in issue #64. After playing the game for three weeks without resolution, Kim realized the problem and printed the victory conditions in issue #63, thus settling the disputes that had raged across the country's gaming tables during the previous month.

Wolfgang Baur reports two minor contributions to the Hall of Shame, neither one of them heinous enough in itself to merit special mention. He remembers that in one installment of the "Wizards Three," Dalamar appeared as a drow in the accompanying artwork, even though the dark elves of Krynn look nothing like the subterranean drow of other campaigns. Wolf also recalls opening the computer game review column in issue #220 with a review of the excellent *Warcraft: Orcs vs.* Humans—one issue after the column led with the excellent *Warcraft: Orcs vs. Humans.*

Lest someone accuse me of picking on my elders and betters, I must point out my own most memorable blunder, far greater than theirs. It occurred just last month, in issue #249. Somehow we managed to rearrange the pages of J. Gregory Keye's excellent short story "Wakes the Narrow Forest," and I didn't catch the mistake before we went to press. For the story to make sense, you must read the pages in the following order: 59-61, 64, 63, 62, and then 65.

That I let this mistake occur in Greg's story is all the worse. In part that's because I think it's one of the best stories we've ever printed. More importantly, Greg is a friend with whom I've often gamed and shared meals, movies, and a few beers.

Beyond any of the other reasons, however, I'm truly sorry for the mistake because Greg knows exactly where I live, and he has a sword.

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I loved the "Warriors of the Wind" article in *DRAGON® Magazine* #244 and knew that the new flying races would add much to my campaign. But tell me, am I the only one who thinks that the XP for the fainil are out of wack?

I set up a short adventure to introduce the race in my campaign, and they ended up nearly slaughtering a solid, experienced group of 6th-level adventurers. Needless to say, my gaming group was none too pleased with the outcome of what I had touted earlier as "a new and exciting opponent" for the afternoon's gaming session. I was left wondering how I could have so badly miscalculated the encounter, so I went back to the article to re-examine the fainil.

It quickly became apparent to me that they are more deadly than other 270 XP monsters and are underrated in experience points. This is what I calculated: 2 HD (base); flies, +1; immunity to any spell (electricity), +1; high intelligence (high to supra 13-18, +l; magic resistance (50 %), +l; spells, level 2 or lower *(darkness,* etc.), +1; missile weapons (hand crossbows), +1; poison (drow sleep), +2. That's 10 HD and 1,400 XP, not 270! And that doesn't include the magical items you mentioned they might have. Even if we allow the disadvantages the fainil have against light and fighting on the ground to subtract a couple of HD, that's still 650 each.

Had I realized I was sending a small flying horde of 650-1,400 XP monsters at the party, I would have definitely reduced the difficulty of the encounter. Rest assured that I will examine the next new monster from your magazine more carefully before I introduce it into my campaign.

Michael Smith
denamike@minot.com
1925 9th st NW Minot, ND

Fool! You are only the first to fall at the hands of our cunning scheme to slay overweening heroes everywhere. The fainil will not be underestimated again! We *shall sweep over the sunlit lands and . . .*

Uh, nevermind what Chris says. Dave here. We just did the math again, and you're right, Michael: Those pesky fainil are tougher than we credited them. Please relay our apologies to your PCs. Those that are still alive, that is.

> ask for many more of this type of article: new character *races* rather than *classes.*

A New Reader

First of all, I'd like to say that, as a new reader (since issue #243), you guys are doing a great job. Even though I don't play in most of the worlds you cover (The MYSTARA® and RAVENLOFT® settings are my campaigns), it's great reading and provides me with new ideas.

On to the new look of issue #247. I like the new look of the letters columns. Having the font size smaller makes room for more letters and more comments from readers or, in the case of "Sage Advice," more questions.

Next, to the article "Rakasta of Mystara": I loved it. It gives great ideas for playing these characters, as well as their abilities and powers, that the Savage Coast supplement didn't have room to go into. I ask for many more of this type of article: new character races rather *than classes.*

This point brings up my next comment: the taltos. I'm not saying it's not a cool concept, but I don't like what I call "barbarian-types." You know, tribe system, earth goddess, etc. Plus, I'd have a hard time keeping track of abilities, which, in my opinion, are too powerful. What havoc would a shapechanger wreak on the RAVENLOFT setting? I can't really comment on "Heroes of Cerilia" all that much, as I don't play in the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign, nor do I use the *Skills & Powers* supplement. Some of the abilities might be interesting as gifts from a god in other settings.

One thing I cannot stress enough: bring back the old "Wyrms of the North" headings! Even though I don't play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, I enjoyed the depictions of the dragons' names in the fashion they used to be!

I enjoy the fiction in every issue, as it brings you back to the real reason for roleplaying: the story.

"Bookwyrms": I guess we could do without, only because it's not all that interesting to many people. But it *is only* two pages, so I can bear it.

Now to two of my favorite sections: "Rogues Gallery" and "Bazaar of the Bizarre." I enjoy "Rogues Gallery" because it describes NPCs from various books and comics. I have one request: feature the RAVENLOFT novel *Shadowborn* in an issue this year. I'm pretty sure many RAVENLOFT fans would love to know Alexi Shadowborn's stats, as well

as what exactly *Ebonbane* is.

Now, I'm sorry to say this, but you guys are really pulling from the bottom of the barrel in this issue's "Bazaar of the Bizarre." Come on, work tools? These could be helpful only to someone running a campaign where the characters are some sort of professionals. I think that this section would be more enjoyable if you started running one or two magical items with histories per month, or the space could easily be used for more articles.

"Give Them Pidgins" was useful but not excitingly so.

On to the comics: I always laugh when I find one in an article. They're actually *funny,* unlike many of the "serious" comics you find in the paper now. "Knights of the Dinner Table" is a great show of what could actually happen at a roleplaying session, and the new strip, "Nodwick," is hilarious. How many times has a character recruited a henchman and sent him to his death? How differently would he feel if the henchman were a humorous character but also useful?

Finally, the "technical" sections of *DRAGON Magazine.* I enjoy the product reviews, even though they usually don't concern TSR products. I would like to see more RAVENLOFT, GREYHAWK®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS products reviewed, if at all possible. The "Previews" section gives insight at what's coming in the next few months, and more information than is presented in the TSR catalog. And "Profiles" I have found interesting, though I would like to see one done on William W. Connors.

What I would like to see:

• Ravenloft material: Maybe some features on the various domains? Even though *Domains of Dread* is out we still don't know enough about some domains. Several well-known but underdone domains are Barovia, Dementlieu, Richemulot, Nova Vaasa, Sithicus, and the various Clusters.

• Psionics: What happened to them? We had Mindstalkers a few issues ago, but then poof! Gone again. I think psionics should be kept separate from the Core Rules of the AD&D® game, if only because they aren't very flavor-correct in many campaign settings. However, I think the system presented in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* should be considered as "generic" psionics, if only because it's easier to understand than the *Skills & Powers* version.

• Character Races: Even though we have the handbooks for the various races, which have their sub-races, I would like to see more features on the lesser-known races and sub-races, as well as setting-specific races. Mystaran Shadow Elves and Alfheim Elves would make good candidates for an overhaul.

• Historical Magical Items and Artifacts: Magical items from campaign settings that have histories, intelligence, and powers beyond their normal ken.

John Talisant
171 Bay Terrace
Staten Island, NY 10306

We're used to most of our correspondence coming from long-time readers, so it's great to hear from someone who has only recently picked up the magazine. As a reward for your kind attention, we'll put some Ravenloft articles in the October issue, and we'll devote an entire issue next January to psionics.

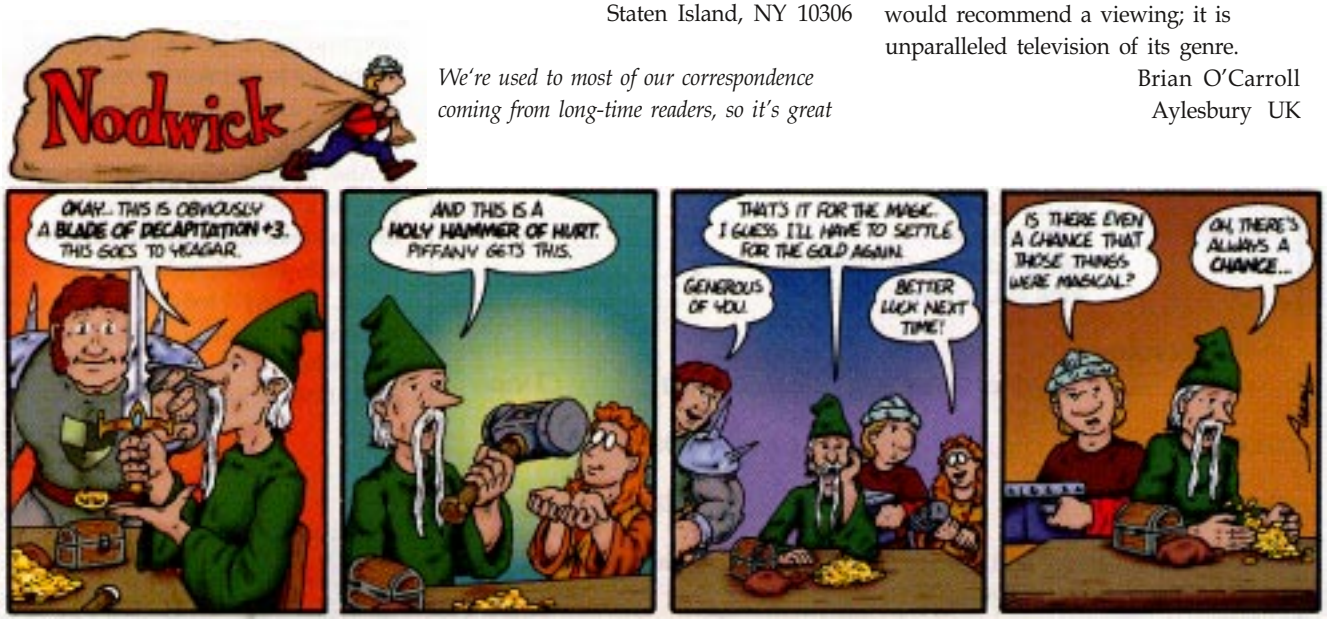
See? It pays to write us a letter.

Another Cheer for Robin Hood

I was delighted to be reminded of the television series "Robin of Sherwood" (HTV/Goldcrest) in your #247 editorial. That was a program I viewed avidly. In particular, the series included-to my memory-the best handling of "main character death" I have ever seen. I don't want to spoil anything for people who have not seen it, but suffice to say that the consequences of the death were played out to the full within the plot; rather than a quick fix, the event was used and took several episodes to cover fully

I discovered (the musical group) Clannad through the series, as I expect many people did, and I share your appreciation of the well-rounded villains and a capable Marion. However, there are other things you mentioned that did not stick in my mind, and one that you did not mention that did: Herne the Hunter. Herne was a somewhat ambiguous character, half a dream, who guided Robin so that he might guide his band of "merry men." By analogy, Herne might have been the hand of the Dungeon Master, giving clues and nudging the instincts of the PCs through a riddle from the lips of an apparition. I would recommend a viewing; it is unparalleled television of its genre.

Brian O'Carroll
Aylesbury UK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AND THIS IS A HOLY HAMMER OF HURT. PIFFANY GETS THIS.
THAT'S IT FOR THE MAGIC. I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR THE GOLD AGAIN.
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OH, THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE...

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So Be It!

Greetings from the Netherlands, where roleplaying is very popular.

Since the acquisition of TSR by Wizards of the Coast, AD&D is back with a vengeance. There are new products for our campaign worlds, and I've noticed that Wizards takes a very professional approach to the market. And if this means that we have to pay some extra money for your products, so be it! As long as the quality remains high-but I think that won't be a problem.

I would also like to give my support for the comeback of the GREYHAWK® campaign. It's one of my favorites, next to the FORGOTTEN REALMS and DARK SUN® settings, although I think it's a pity that there will not be many new products for the DARK SUN campaign. I read somewhere that DARK SUN was meant to be a world for experienced gamers, but according to Troy Denning, the psionic-rich lands of Athas are a bit overpowered. I do not agree; a good DM can balance psionics. Furthermore, it truly is a unique world, without the same boring dragons, wizards, kingdoms, elves, dwarves and magic.

What I like most about the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting are the many interesting NPCs described in the *Heroes* and *Villains Lorebooks*. I would like to see similar products for the other campaigns.

I heard some rumors that there are plans for a campaign world in the *Magic: the Gathering** multiverse. I strongly give my support to this idea. Dominia has many interesting features like a good storyline, a great history and colorful people not to mention the many legends that have a big impact on important events in the story.

Also, *DRAGON Magazine* is an excellent place to give more information on certain topics like castle building, roleplaying in general, and other important issues, although I would like to see more information about NPC-roleplaying and storytelling, which is a problem for many DMs including myself.

Joris Vellekate
The Netherlands

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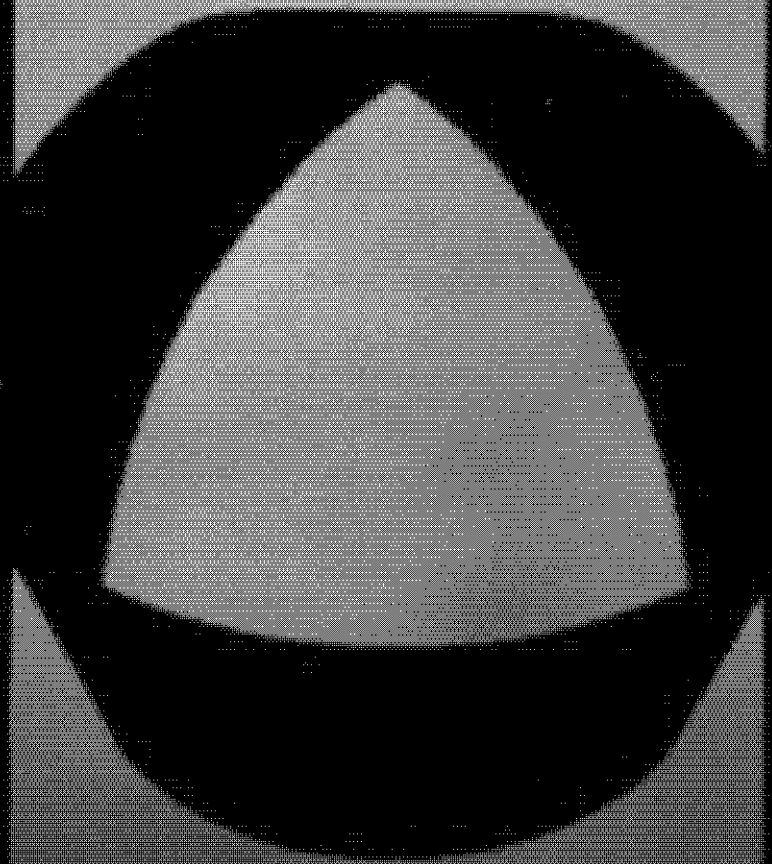

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Question of the Month

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For those who've tried the ALTERNITY® game, what house rules have you already created?

Method I Purists

Some thoughts prompted by previous letters in "Forum" (which, by the way, is one of my favorite sections of the magazine).

On cavaliers: To me, these are fighters roleplayed as knights, noble or ignoble. Just as an assassin (in 2nd-Edition game terms) is a fighter or thief roleplayed as a professional killer, a cavalier PC is simply a fighter who is (or aspires to be) a knight but for some reason is free (or obliged) to roam around seeking adventure rather than dancing attendance on his or her liege lord. So ditch the separate class or kit, and substitute weapon and nonweapon proficiencies, a suitable character background, and roleplaying. Presto! Problem solved.

On fighters vs. paladins and rangers: Maybe I'm naive, but most of the game imbalance owing to seemingly overpowerful classes stem from excessively generous methods of rolling up the PCs in the first place. In my 15 years of playing and DMing, my friends and I have always stuck to the plain vanilla Method I (roll 3d6 six times). If the scores are really low across the board (say, nothing higher than 10), the player simply starts again. Once a viable character is rolled, however, that's it: time to tool up and sally forth. I've run, played with, or DMed over 200 characters rolled up in this manner, and only four have been paladins and three rangers.

In my opinion, this rarity is crucial. I have no real problem with the idea of one character class (e.g., the paladin) being more powerful than other classes, as long as it doesn't make them redundant. The PC-generation procedure ensures that most warrior-types rolled up continue to be fighters, pure and simple. As rare beasts, paladins and rangers should be special (which, by the by, is one reason why I would also allow them weapon specialization). If the DM operates an absurdly generous rolling-up method like Methods IV and VI, then no doubt the more power-minded players will begin to neglect the no-frills fighter class. So, before you get the extra dice out, think long and hard about what you're doing.

> It's more important to spark and sustain a new player's interest in the game than to enforce persnickety rules.

The only time we bend our own rule is in the case of novice players. It's more important to spark and sustain a new player's interest in the game than to enforce persnickety rules. With a beginner, therefore, I briefly describe what the four basic classes do, their weaknesses, strengths, and so forth, and try to gauge which class the player feels most comfortable with in terms of the underlying concept. If, say, the wizard class clearly appeals to the novice, we then roll up a wizard PC using Method III (Method I, then assign the scores where you wish). No "special" classes are offered, and it is made plain that this "generous" method applies only to the first two or three PCs rolled up by that person (i.e., only as long as they remain novices).

On the subject of novice players: Chad Dukes (in issue #242) made some good points. I recently had the good fortune of expanding our AD&D® group with the addition of three very keen beginners. (It had dwindled to three veteran players.) I love the way they play the game, and I marvel at how differently they experience monsters that the veterans see as AC-this, HD-that. On the other hand, I do my best to make it impossible for even the more experienced players to get so wised-up that they get bored. They do not read any material I might wish to use, and I've accumulated so much that they haven't got a hope of knowing the spells, monsters, or whatever it is they encounter. When staging encounters, I never call a monster by its "official" name unless I know for certain that one or more PCs know what it is. To inject a little dose of realistic confusion, the people in my world might use different names for the same monster, or the same names for different monsters, or even specific names in a generic way For instance, they might call on the PCs to wipe out some goblins, but the term "goblin" might mean hobgoblin, xvart, or even "two-legged humanoid smaller than a troll." So even when the PCs have a name for what they're about to hunt down, the players can never be sure.

When veterans and novices sit at the same gaming table, some thought should be given to ensuring that neither type of player spoils it for the other.

From the veteran's point of view, this entails an obligation to let the novice player experience whatever awe, wonder, and bafflement the adventure holds

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in store. If the veteran is playing a 1st-level PC who knows as little as the novice's character, then game-related knowledge gathered elsewhere by the veteran's other PCs *must* be kept out of the game. If the veteran exclaims (or has his PC exclaim) something like "Gnolls! Ha!" then that player is playing totally out of character. If you're the kind of DM who rewards good roleplaying (i.e., playing in character), then you should feel free to punish the opposite by deducting experience, certainly as a last resort.

On a possible 3rd Edition: Well, from the above, you can probably guess my recommendations. *Rule to keep:* Method I. *Rule to scrap:* any other method of rolling the PCs' ability scores!

Craig Hilton
London, England

Poison

The subject of poison has seen many interpretations in the AD&D game. Sometimes it seems that every author who uses it has his own slant on how deadly it should be and how it should affect characters.

As it currently stands, poison is far too deadly. At low levels, a dwarven cleric with maximum Constitution (the best saving throw situation at low levels) has a saving throw vs. poison of 5. That's outstanding compared to a gnomish, human, elven, or half-elven rogue, warrior, or wizard, whose saving throw is a 13 or 14.

Unfortunately, the dwarf is likely to fail a save starting at dice roll number 4. For the duration of three levels' worth of adventuring, the dwarf goes against the odds if he has to make a total of four saving throws. Other characters aren't so lucky. The humans and others (except clerics) are likely to fail the very first time! Considering how often giant spiders, snakes, and other poisonous monsters are found in published adventures, it's a wonder any characters ever make it past the lowest levels.

To complicate matters, many poisons kill their victim if he fails the saving throw. Even high-level characters must beware the tiny poison needle, for if they fail a saving throw, the old rusty trap might end years of heroic deeds. A 28th level wizard might be able to kill a small dragon with a power word, but the poison needle stands a 35% chance of taking him out.

The presence of "instant kill" poisons in a world where characters are expected to survive a fall of nearly any height is odd. In the real world, as the *DMG* points out, most snakebite victims survive. Death by animal venom is rare. Accidental poison, although more likely, is still not a frequent event. Even murder by poison is less common than other means.

Also, poison is the only form of damage to come in such a unique format. Poison has one effect if a save is made, another if it fails, yet another if it is taken the wrong way (ingested vs. injected). Onset time varies by type as well. Some standardization is needed to keep every poison from being unique. Certainly an arrow affects its target differently than a staff, but damage is 1d6 either way.

Poison damage should carry a range, just like weapon damage.

Poison damage should carry a range, just like weapon damage. Instead of relying solely on the resistance of the target, damage might be affected by the effectiveness of the delivery. When a weapon hits, the dice determine how well the target was struck. Rolling high indicates that a substantial blow hit the target. Low damage means the target avoided a serious wound. The same can apply to poison if we assign a range to poison damage.

The damage range can depend on the size and potency of the venomous creature, or the effectiveness of the man-made toxin. A creature that uses venom to kill prey typically has a less effective dose than one that relies on poison for defense. Some creatures are notorious for producing venom that is much more lethal than needed to kill a creature their own size. A large creature with other formidable attacks might need a lesser toxicity if its teeth and claws can seriously damage prey alone. The poison is a secondary method of securing food and safety.

Based on this reasoning, a size T creature might generate a poison that causes damage equal to a good weapon—about 1d8 hp damage. A larger creature, or one known for lethality, might produce venom that inflicts 2d8 or 3d8 hp damage—enough to kill most 0-level characters and real-world size S or M creatures. Fantastically poisonous creatures might generate poison worthy of 6d8 or 8d8 hp damage.

To carry this example further, poison damage might be similar to the hit dice of the creature in question, with a greater or lesser toxicity based on the creature's needs. The wyvern, with fearsome bite attack, relies less on his poison and might inflict 5d8 hp damage—caused mostly by quantity, not potency. A cobra, on the other hand, might inflict 3d8 hp damage—more than his hit dice because of its lethal nature. The cobra's average damage becomes 14 hp, or only 7 hp if the victim saves.

Thus, even a successful saving throw can result in death, but the poison would have to be extremely potent. More likely, if a victim suffers an extreme dose of poison (as indicated by a high damage roll), or more than one dose from the same source in a short period of time, the victim suffers some damage as the poison courses through his body. Poison's lethality is not removed, just lessened.

To standardize onset times, the poison damage comes at a steady pace: 1 hp per round (or one every other round if the target saves). Characters have no idea how dangerous a poison is until it runs its course. The continuous damage simulates the gradual introduction of the poison through the bloodstream and its effects on the different parts of the body. The continuous poison damage is still very dangerous but in a different way: the afflicted character may not cast spells while suffering damage.

Poisons that don't kill can also be simulated with this method. Paralytic poisons, for example, might cause 2d6 hp "paralytic damage" for effectiveness, but they don't inflict actual damage. When the indicated paralytic damage exceeds the character's hit points (at 1

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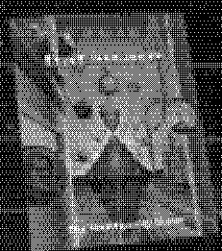

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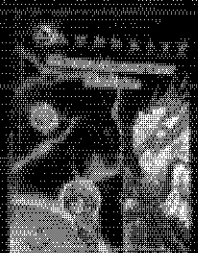

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hp/round), he succumbs to the effects of the poison.

In the case of non- lethal poisons, the DM might need to record the duration, or he can use the same dice roll in rounds. A 2d6 paralytic poison would paralyze a character for 2d6 rounds. Reducing the lethality of poison keeps DMs out of the situation of removing poison monsters from low-level adventures because they're killing off all of the characters. The DM doesn't have to fudge a saving throw to keep a character alive during an exciting game because of a single randomly encountered giant spider. Standardizing poison rules keeps DMs from keeping notes or memorizing a full description of every single different source of poison in the campaign. All he has to do is remember a simple damage range, just like remembering a monster's bite damage or hit dice.

Lloyd Brown III
Jacksonville, Florida

When there is a need to penetrate armor, the sword cannot beat a polearm.

An Axe To Grind

M. Kant in his letter on weapons in issue #248 has demonstrated that he has not handled an axe before. I have. True, it was just chopping down trees, not trying to use one in a fight, but that is tricky enough. If the blade doesn't hit squarely, it bounces; a two-inch sapling barely has its bark greened by a chop that is slightly off true. Worse, if you misjudge the distance to the bole, then you either miss entirely and throw yourself off balance, or you hit with the handle. In the first case, you can hit yourself-typically painful though seldom hazardous. Recall what I said about the blade turning earlier? The same applies if you accidentally hit yourself, and that is what you hope for, because every time I have seen someone cut himself with an axe, he was badly injured.

When a tree is down, if you want to strip the smaller branches, you use a machete instead of a hatchet. Why? The machete is easier to use.

My point is that the way an axe is "built and weighted" does not "[force] one to use it correctly"

The next point which might need clarification is the issue of the longbow. When the English defeated the French at Agincourt, the French horses were devastated by the English archery because they were not armored and the yeomen had a tremendous rate of fire. Most of the dead knights either broke their necks falling off their horses or drowned in the mud. Thus, you cannot conclude that the longbow has uncanny armor penetration based on the performance of the English troops at Agincourt.

Modern bow hunters, using compound bows with steel tips better than those any medieval warrior could have possessed, still need to move within 30 yards of their targets, unarmored animals like deer, to have a good chance of getting the penetration they desire.

The second major point I'm trying to make is to not read every letter in "Forum" and assume it is based on hard evidence. Look up the truth for yourself. If you want to check out my facts, go to the library reference desk and ask for help finding bow hunting magazines; they do exist. Also, find a friend who needs some wood cut and take a few swings with an axe to see how easy a solid blow is with little training, though you should have someone with experience to help avoid cutting yourself.

Charles Stucker
Seabrook, TX

Another Riposte

I'm writing in response to M. Kant's letter in "Forum," issue #248. Kant begins by declaring, "Some weapons should remain clearly superior to others simply because some weapons are clearly superior to others." Kant then tries to support this statement using mostly false information. Though making a few valid statements about the weapons concerned, the letter is full of inaccuracies.

Kant makes a few good points in that:

1. Polearms can be cheaper to make than swords;

2. It was more practical for England to enlist peasant yeomanry skilled with the longbow rather than train longbowmen from scratch;

3. It takes far less time to train a crossbowman than a longbowman.

The inaccuracies begin with the crossbow at Agincourt. Knights specialized in mounted combat, not missile combat. The French knights at this battle did not use crossbows, but the mounted lance and sword. The French did have men at arms using both crossbow and longbow at this battle, but they were deployed poorly behind the knights and first battle of infantry.

Kant then makes some extremely erroneous statements about polearms: "Polearms were just glorified Swiss-army knives tied to the ends of sticks. After Alexander the Great's pikemen, polearms have never advanced, with the possible exception of the halberd, which is really only good for chopping off the ends of pikes."

As a professional armorer and weaponsmith, with 17 years of experience in reenacting medieval-style battles, I can safely say that these statements are totally untrue. The sword is indeed a versatile weapon; you can carry it just about anywhere, and it will deal out a good amount of damage. However, when there is a need to penetrate armor, the sword cannot beat a polearm. It is true that you need sufficient room to wield a polearm, but under the right conditions a 6' bladed polearm is probably the most versatile weapon to be found.

History demonstrates the devastating effect of polearms. The Dacian Falx caused the Romans under Trajan to add iron crossbars to their already excellent-quality helmets. Scandinavian axes hewed through helm and mail. The Swiss used their halberds at the Battle of Sempach to devastating effect on German plate armor. The mounted lance has been used effectively from ancient times on into this century. The statement that Kant makes about the halberd being "really only good for chopping off the ends of pikes," is one of the myths of military history. Though polearms are excellent at penetrating armor, using them to try and hack off pike heads is a great waste of time. Tests have shown that a wooden shaft made of inferior quality soft wood and held in a stationary battle stance, can survive in excess of 30 blows from an axe or great sword.

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Make the shaft of quality hardwood, have an experienced pikeman wield it evasively, and it takes even longer to break. A unit of halberdiers deployed to cut a path through pikes could spend half an hour hacking away and achieve little. Even if they broke off a few pikeheads, the jagged ends of the shafts could still be used quite well as a weapon. It is true that the shafts of polearms were sometimes partially protected by metal lappets. This would be to ward off long-term damage, and not due to the particular fear of an enemy cutting the shaft apart with one blow.

Each weapon can be superior in one situation and inferior in another. A good DM should take such variables into account to make a wider array of weapons more useful to the player character.

Joe Piela
Tallahassee, FL

Proficiencies Revisited

In response to the "Forum" letter about nonweapon proficiencies by Lloyd Brown III (in issue #247), I think they make much more sense than the existing systems. While I enjoy the customized character creation and the subabilities in PLAYER'S OPTION™ books, our group does not use the CP system for NWPs. (It is too statistically unlucky for dice rolling, since the numbers start off very low.) Instead, we start with the *Player's Handbook* slot method but use the PLAYER'S OPTION subability scores for success checks.

The old way, however, while giving more balance to the dice rolling, is limiting in terms of what proficiencies are selected. I become frustrated when I play a big dumb fighter and must pick the same few proficiencies that ensure survival while adventuring, since the character has no bonus proficiencies for Intelligence. It would be nice if I could have a big dumb fighter who, through having a high Charisma, is also good at singing as well as endurance, blind-fighting, and so on. Or perhaps a cleric who, through being extremely dextrous, makes simple collection pots for her temple as well as knowing the adventuring proficiencies of religion, spellcraft, and the other standards. Normally, I would not pick singing or pottery, since they are not very useful when bashing things up in a dungeon crawl.

The only things I would disagree about is that bonus slots should start on an ability score of 14, rather than 13, and maybe not allowing bonus slots on Constitution, since this already adds the bonus of extra hit points at high ability levels. (But to each his own.)

If anything, I think it is the proficiency system that should be considered if you go ahead with a 3rd Edition of AD&D.

Lizzi Plant
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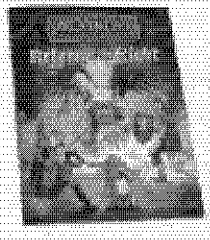

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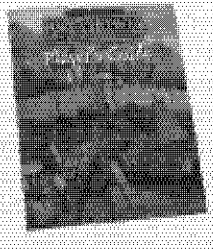

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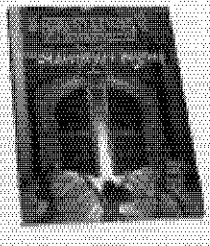

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By Skip Williams

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This month, the Sage ponders questions about spells and magical items from the AD&D® game, including the ever irksome stoneskin *spell.*

The description for the *necklace of prayer beads* says that each bead can be used once per day. At what level of magic are the spells cast? Also, the karma bead description says that it allows the priest to cast spells as if four levels higher (with respect to range, duration, etc.). Is this a constant effect? If not, what is its duration, and what happens if a *necklace of prayer beads* has two or more karma beads? Are the results cumulative, or does it allow the function to be used once a day per karma bead?

Spell-like effects from a *necklace of prayer beads* (or from any ring, weapon, or miscellaneous magical item) function as though cast by a 12th-level character.

A karma bead functions continuously-all the wearer's spells get the casting level boost. Spell-like abilities from items the wearer uses don't get the boost. There is no special effect if a particular *necklace of prayer beads* has more than one karma bead.

If an item has a special power usable once a day (say, a heal spell), how long does it take to renew that power once it is used? Is it 24 hours after use? At the next midnight or dawn? None of the above?

This is entirely up to the DM. Any of the methods you suggest make fine "renewal" times; you could add the next noon, the next sunset, or any other daily cycle to the list. Its also all right to set a daily cycle with a minimum period of time in between, such as the next dawn or dusk (whichever is farther away), or the next noon, but never twice in any eight hour period.

Items in the campaign might "renew" on the same cycle, or the cycle can vary from item to item. The former has the virtue of being easy to remember, but the latter adds variety and mystery

Can a *wall of force* or similar barrier stop a *sphere of annihilation?*

A *sphere of annihilation* would bore a hole through a *wall of force* or any other physical wall (such as a *wall of stone, wall or iron,* or *wall of ice).* A *sphere of annihilation* stops moving *if* it hits *an antimagic shell.* Technically, a *prismatic wall* or *prismatic sphere* would destroy a *sphere of annihilation,* as it destroys any unattended item of less than artifact power that touches it. Some DMs prefer to grant a *sphere of annihilation* artifact-level resistance to destruction in this manner, but *the sphere* is still sent to another plane if it touches a *prismatic effect* with the 7th layer intact (as would an unattended artifact in a similar situation).

Do item saving throws reduce damage received or negate it entirely?

Most item saving throws are all-or-nothing propositions. The item either makes a successful saving throw and survives whatever event made the saving throw necessary, or it fails and is destroyed. I suppose if the DM has assigned an item hit points, as discussed in Chapter 6 of the *DMG,* one could allow a damaging attack to inflict reduced damage to the item even after a successful item saving throw.

The *Skills & Powers* and *Spells & Magic* books include some abilities that are available to just about everybody except thieves. Is there some reason thieves can't get bigger hit dice? (Even wizards can have this one.) What about priest or warrior THAC0 advancement? Warrior's exceptional Strength or hit point adjustment? I've also noticed that thieves can't get extra character points by choosing disadvantages as other classes can. Are there any disadvantages thieves can choose?

I can't think of any good reason why thieves can't choose some of these abilities; their character-point values and effects when selected for thieves are as follows:

Bigger hit dice: 10 CP's for d8.

Better THAC0 advancement: 15 CPs for warrior THAC0.

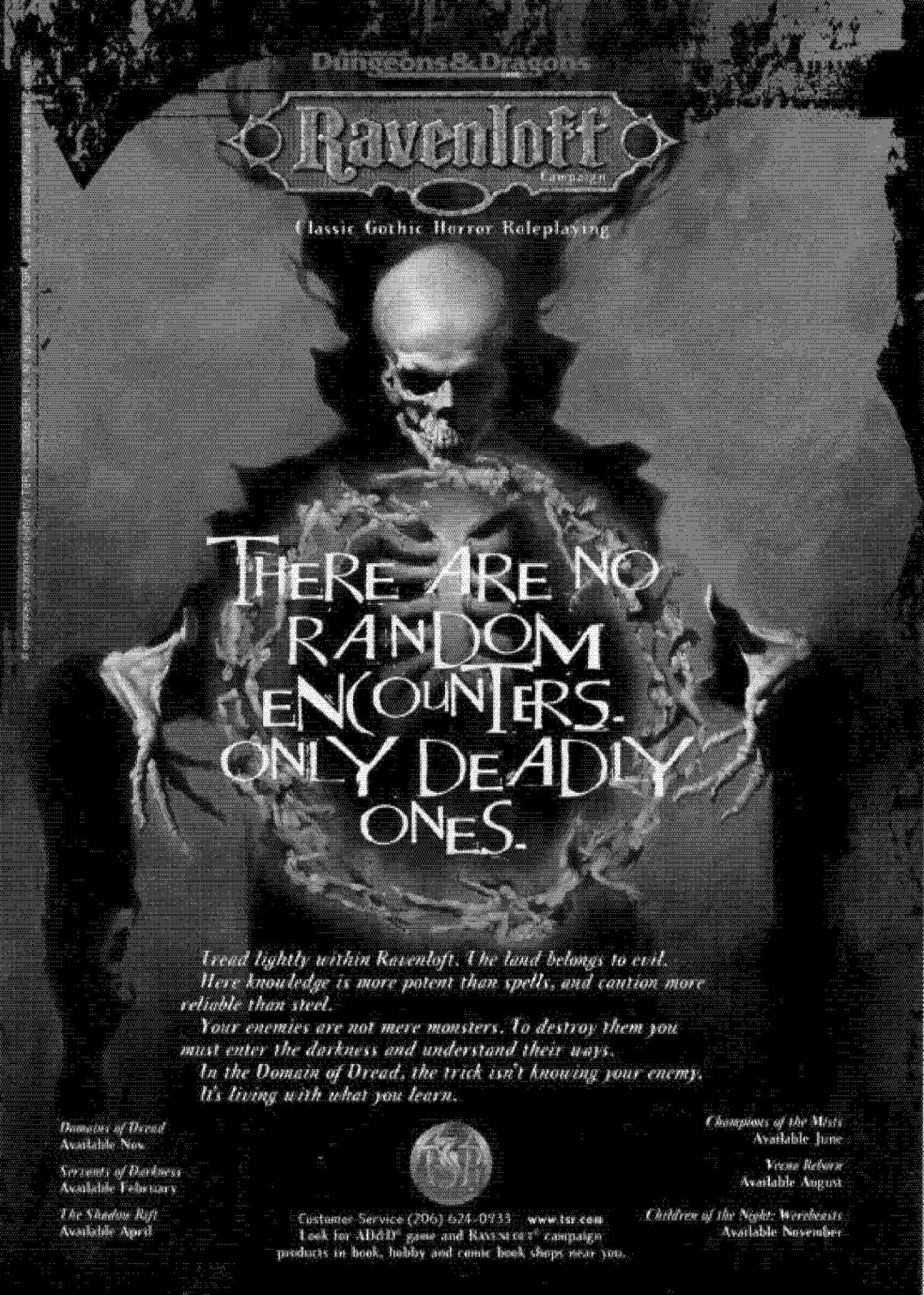
Warrior Exceptional Strength: 5 CPs.

Warrior Constitution Adjustment: 5 CPs.

Thieves can select disadvantages as follows:

No Armor: +5 CPs.

Limited magical item use: +5 CPs for each barred category. See *S&P,* page 48, for the list of categories; note that a thief (or any other character) who already has claimed 5 CPs for not wearing armor cannot gain 5 more CPs for not using magical armor.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Is the lightning from a *call lightning* spell magical, or does the spell just control normal lighting? How do you handle saving throws and the effects of magic resistance in regard to this spell?

Lighting generated with a *call lightning* spell is magical. Creatures struck by lightning from the spell are allowed saving throws vs. spell with any appropriate adjustments for race and Dexterity. Items subjected to the spell make item saving throws against lightning. Magic resistance works against lightning from the spell according to the rules for magic resistance vs. area effects (see DMG, Chapter 9); for a comprehensive look at how magic resistance works in play see "Magic Resistance, Step by Step" in issue #218.

Does *Keoghtom's ointment* help mummy rot at all?

Does *Keoghtom's ointment* help mummy rot at all? In the description of mummy rot, it is specific about a *cure disease* spell being needed to get rid of the affliction. The *ointment* has the property of curing disease, but is it the same as the spell? Also, the description of mummy rot says the afflicted character cannot benefit from *cure wounds* spells, but what about things like the hit points gained once a character changes back from a *polymorph self* spell?

Yes, the *cure disease* power of *Keoghtom's ointment* cures mummy rot. A character ending a *polymorph self* spell could get the full 1d12 hp damage back, or only 10% of that, at the DM's option.

Can a character cast a *nightmare* spell on a person he saw in the past if he doesn't know the target's real name and appearance because the target was disguised?

The recipient of a *dream* or *nightmare* spell must be identified in such a way as to leave no doubt about who the target is. The attempt fails if the sender identifies the recipient in a vague way. The caster need not know the target's name or true identity to use the spell successfully For example, the caster could specify the target as "the cloaked man I met on the road last night." The spell could indeed fail if the "cloaked man" was actually a woman (because the caster really didn't really meet any cloaked men). The spell would certainly fail if the caster had encountered several cloaked people on the road (there would be no way to determine which person was the intended target).

Note that a mostly erroneous description could still allow the spell to succeed so long as the errors didn't render the caster's choice of targets unclear. For example, the Scarlet Pimpernel's "real" name was Sir Percy Blakeney; however, the Pimpernel was a personality of great repute and could have been the target of a *nightmare* spell even if the caster didn't know he was Blakeney. There was only one Scarlet Pimpernel.

In combat, if a *figurine of wondrous power* is solely responsible for a kill, does the experience go to the figurine's owner? My DM says no, because an activated figurine is a creature, but my argument is that a *figurine* is an item, just like a wand or staff, and that my character should get the experience if his *figurine* killed a foe. Who is correct?

Your DM is "correct."

In general, experience for any defeated opponent should be divided among the group if the whole group faced the creature together. (Note that one does not necessarily have to slay a foe to defeat it.) If it was just the *figurine* owner against the monster, the owner has a reasonable claim to the experience. I'd sure give it to him—your reasoning covers the matter nicely.

On the other hand, it's a bad idea to expect the DM to hand out experience each time your character kills something; DMs often have good reasons for not awarding experience for creatures killed. One very common reason is that a creature killed does not always equate to a defeated foe. If a creature does not pose a threat to a party or stand in the way of some legitimate goal the party might have, it is not a foe even if the party attacks and slays it. The DM has every reason to withhold experience for such hollow victories.

What is the guiding principle of the *teleport* spell? Is the caster moving a set mass a set distance to a certain locale within logical parameters? If the caster is facing north, will the caster then appear facing north? Does the caster's volume have to be considered at the points of departure and arrival (thereby creating a vacuum in the area left behind and a breeze in the area entered)? Does the caster or the spell correct for dynamic locales (say, a bar where the tables and chairs are moved around) When a *teleport* attempt fails, does the 10'-per-point-off rule apply to the low roll as well as to the high one?

The "guiding principle" is that the caster disappears from one location and instantly reappears in another. This can have whatever minor theatrical effects the DM cares to assign. The key word here is minor; no thermonuclear explosions result if the caster arrives low. Muted sounds as the caster vanishes and reappears are acceptable. It's a good idea to assume that the caster's facing (in regard to compass direction) does not change during the trip.

The more the caster knows about her destination, the safer she is when teleporting; the success table in the spell description reflects this concept. If the destination is "dynamic" the caster cannot claim accurate knowledge of the site. Such a locale falls into the studied carefully category at best.

The *High-Level Campaigns* book suggests rolling 1d100 anytime a caster arrives low. The result is the number of yards below the intended arrival point the caster actually appears. You can use the caster's success roll to determine the distance instead. The caster arrives 10 feet low for every point over the highest "safe" roll. For example, the caster rolls a 98 when trying to reach in area she has seen casually; a safe arrival requires a roll of 09-96 on 1d100. A 98 is two points higher than 96, resulting in an arrival 20 feet low.

Several issues ago, you said that one attack drains a charge from a *stoneskin*

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spell, hit or miss. If a giant throws a boulder or a wizard casts a *fireball* a group containing a character using *stoneskin,* does the character still lose a charge from his *stoneskin?*

If the recipient of a *stoneskin* spell is caught in an area-effecting attack, the creature loses a charge from the *stoneskin* no matter where the attack was actually aimed.

In the standard AD&D rules, a giant's boulder-throwing attack is not an area attack, and a giant's boulder would not drain a *stoneskin* charge unless actually aimed at the *stoneskin* recipient. If you treat giant-hurled boulders as area effects in your campaign, however, the boulder will drain a *stoneskin* charge if the recipient is in the boulder's area of effect. Also, if you treat giant-hurled boulders as grenade-like missiles, and a boulder bounces onto a *stoneskin* recipient, the spell loses a charge and negates whatever damage the recipient might have suffered.

Can a dragon use its *clairaudience* ability to notice characters using *dust of disappearance* when the invisible characters are in the dragon's lair? What if the invisible characters are outside the lair?

A dragon's *clairaudience* ability works throughout its lair (and a tad beyond). *Clairaudience* involves hearing, not sight, and *dust of disappearance* doesn't make characters silent. It's a good bet that a dragon using its *clairaudience* ability will hear invisible invaders coming. A dragon can also *detect invisibility* in a radius of 10 feet times its age category. This ability defeats *dust of disappearance.*

The description for the *sword of wounding* says the damage the sword inflicts can only be healed by resting or nonmagical means. Can the damage be restored by the following methods, and do they stop the bleeding the sword causes? The *vampiric touch* spell, vampiric regeneration, monk healing (from the original AD&D game), regeneration (from a *ring of regeneration,* a high Constitution score, or a *shapechanged* character in troll form).

No—to both questions—in every case. Only binding or 10 minutes of time stops the bleeding. Only rest heals the damage. The first line of the *sword of wounding* description is quite specific about the inability of regeneration to heal damage the sword inflicts (but see the next question). Note that *shapechange* could provide regeneration, but not if the DM decides an assumed form's regeneration power is magical in nature.

What effect, if any, would a *ray of enfeeblement* have on a character wearing a *girdle of giant strength?*

How does a *sword of wounding* affect the tarrasque?

The tarrasque's legendary regeneration power can heal any kind of injury. The creature regenerates damage from a *sword of wounding* at its normal rate. Assume that any "wound" stops bleeding after only four rounds, or when the tarrasque has regenerated all damage from the sword, whichever comes first.

What effect, if any, would a *ray of enfeeblement* have on a character wearing a *girdle of giant strength?*

The spell reduces the target's Strength score, no matter what the score's source.

Can the second-level priest spell *aid* cure any lost hit points if the recipient has already suffered damage?

An *aid* spell does not cure damage. The recipient immediately receives 1d8 temporary hit points regardless of current hit point total. The hit points last until the recipient suffers damage (the recipient always loses temporary hit points first) or until the spell ends.

The spell description and the table for the *charm monster* spell seem contradictory. Does the spell work only on creatures less than eight hit dice (the spell effects 2d4 hit dice worth of creatures), or does it work on any one creature or 2d4 hit dice of creatures?

The *charm monster* spell affects 2d4 levels or hit dice of creatures, but always at least one creature, regardless of level or hit dice; see the first paragraph of the spell description.

Would it be unfair to limit the *metamorphose liquids* (a first-level wizard spell from the *Tome of Magic)* to simple liquids? I'm having a problem with player characters wanting to replicate things like Greek fire, the mystic's nonmagical healing potions, and so on.

No. It's okay to treat any complex, herbal, or alchemical mixture as too complex for the spell to duplicate, just as a "magical" liquid is.

I'm having some trouble with the sixth-level wizard spell *tentacles* (from the *Compete Wizard's Handbook).* If the caster uses a weapon in each tentacle, does the caster gain an additional attack for each tentacle at the caster's THAC0? Are the extra attacks subject to the normal penalties for attacks with two weapons? Does the caster's Strength add to the damage done by a weapon wielded by a tentacle? Do the *tentalcles* have the same AC as the caster, including modifications from spells like *blur?* If the caster is protected by *stoneskin,* are the *tentacles* also protected?

The tentacles give the caster two extra attacks each round. These are not subject to the normal penalties for attacking with more than one weapon, though the DM is certainly free to impose them. All attacks the caster makes with the tentacles are resolved using her current THAC0, except that the caster's Strength bonuses or penalties do not apply to the attacks.

The tentacles have the same AC as the caster and any special protection the caster might enjoy also extends to the tentacles.

Skip Williams reports that he wrote the bulk of this month's column after helping some friends move into a new home. He imagines that a pair of tentacles might have made the task go faster, especially when wrestling queen-size mattress up and down staircases.

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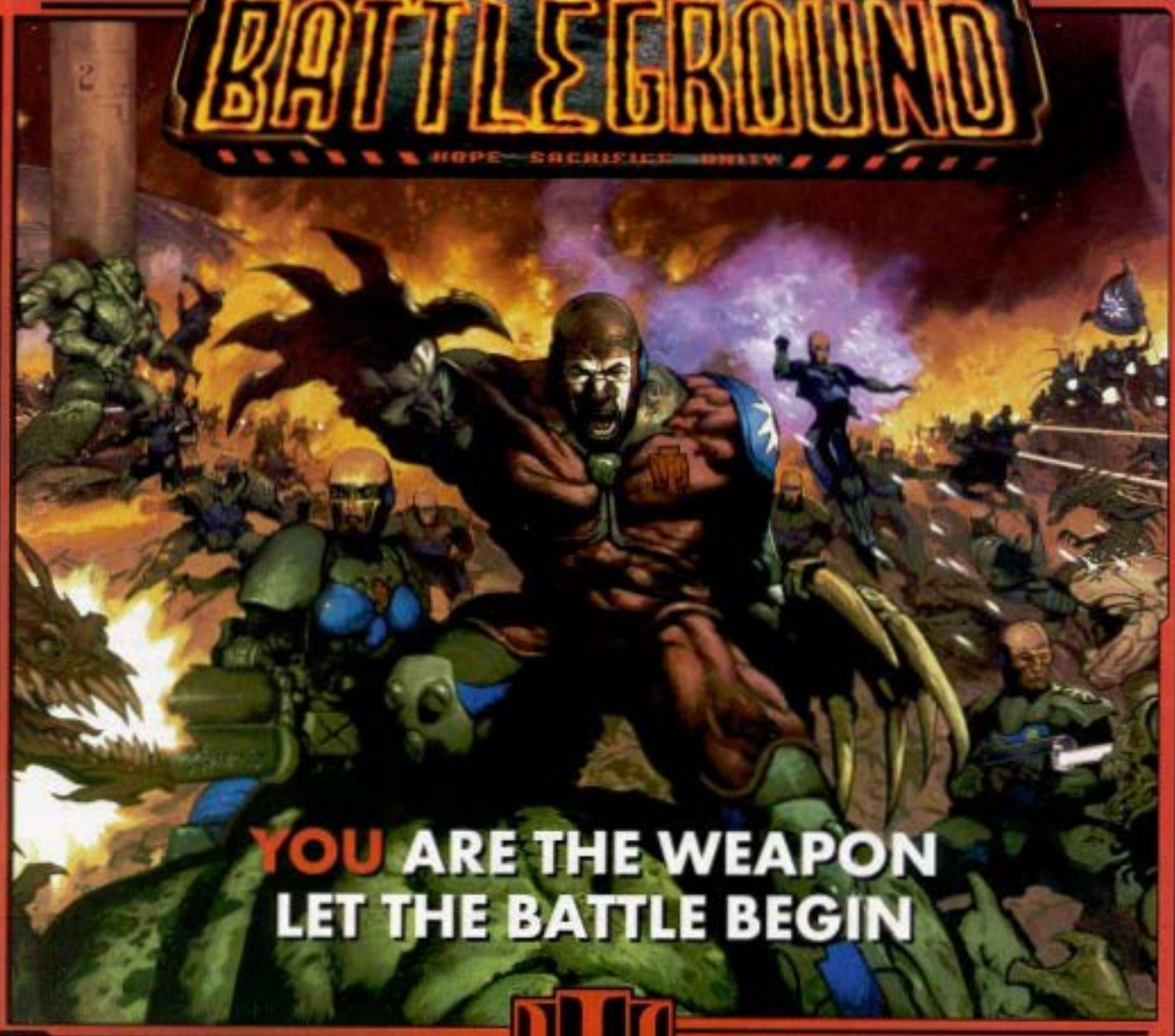

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AUGUST

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DMing as an Artform

By Peter Adkison

When I was going to college I would occasionally wonder whether I was wasting time with all this gaming stuff, particularly given how much time I was investing as a DM. Then I had the good fortune of dating an art major named Linda.

Linda was a couple years older and more mature than I. Roleplaying and character development came naturally to her, and before long we were able to explore the concepts of marriage, child-rearing (complete with rebellious teenagers), politics, religion, and the morality of adventuring—you know, killing intelligent critters and taking their loot for experience points.

Linda has a strong philosophical bent, and we spent nearly as much time talking about roleplaying as we spent actually gaming. One evening, I mentioned my concern about how much time I was spending on developing my campaign, Chaldea, and asked her whether she thought it was a waste of time. Her response was an unequivocal "no!"

Linda went on to share some words of wisdom that have inspired me ever since. She said something like this: "Peter, your campaign is a work of art. While roleplaying campaigns will never be recognized as broadly as music or paintings, it's every bit as legitimate as the works of Mozart or Picasso. A well crafted roleplaying campaign is a beautiful thing; it can inspire, it can lift the spirit, and it can cause people to weep for joy or sorrow. In all ways, you are an artist, and the pursuit of art is not only legitimate, it is what makes us human."

This perhaps was one of the most pivotal discussions of my life. It made me feel confident that the time I was spending on gaming was at least as important as the time artists spend painting and musicians spend composing. Whenever I've been questioned about my investment, I've used this as an effective defense. Perhaps without that insight, I might have drifted away from gaming and would never have realized the dream of starting my own game company, working at TSR, or writing columns in a prestigious gaming magazine. More importantly, I would have missed out on the hundreds of hours of enjoyment and fulfillment in the years to come.

Not only did this conversation help me justify my time spent gaming, it also helped me focus on this idea of developing a campaign as a work of art. Ken McGlothlen, a close friend and co-author of *The Primal Order,* even coined a term for my passion: "pandevelopment," meaning "the continual process of plausibly developing a campaign on all fronts." *(The Primal Order,* Wizards of the Coast, page xv.)

To this pursuit I have devoted vast amounts of time and creative energy. While I certainly have incorporated adventures and source materials from TSR's publications and works of fiction from authors like Jack Chalker, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Stephen R. Donaldson, I'm most proud of the parts of Chaldea that are uniquely mine. More importantly, I believe my players have often enjoyed those elements the most too.

When you put your heart and soul into creating something unique for your campaign, your players will feel it. In many ways, excelling at the art of DMing is more difficult than any other form of art simply because there are so many skills to employ. Creating the campaign makes you something of a writer, while designing the map makes you an illustrator, and running a good game session is like acting, directing, and improv all at the same time.

Obviously, we at TSR make money by selling you worlds and adventures, and we hope you'll keep buying them so that we can stay in business! But if you haven't recently taken a long stroll and dreamed you were walking in Faerun, the Demiplane of Dread, or a world of your own creation, I encourage you to do so. Take something to your next game that brings out the artist in you, and watch how your players react.

In developing his campaign Peter looks for inspiration from many sources: his wife and friends, movies, novels, roleplaying products, and, most recently, the "Knights of the Dinner Table" comic strip!

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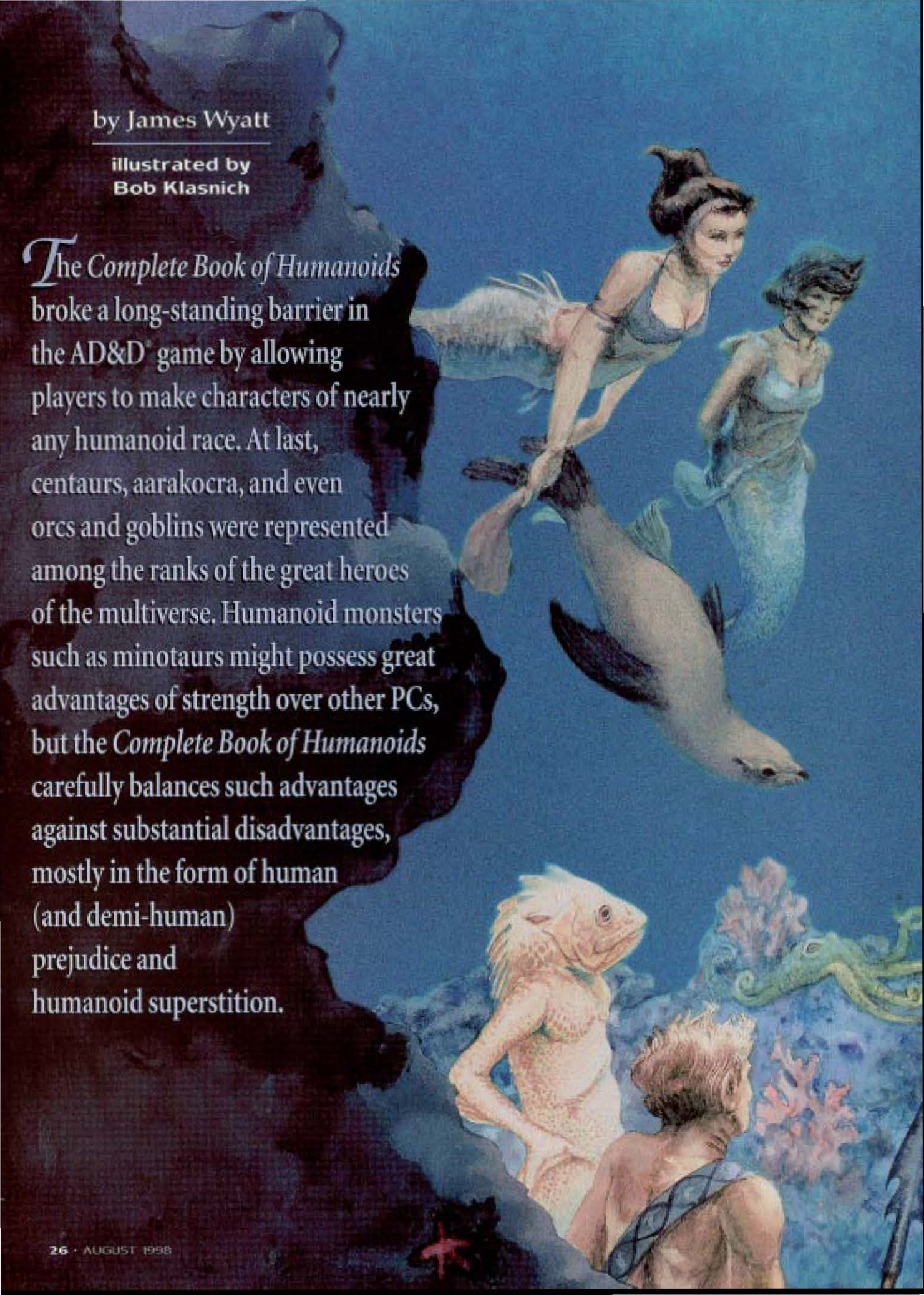
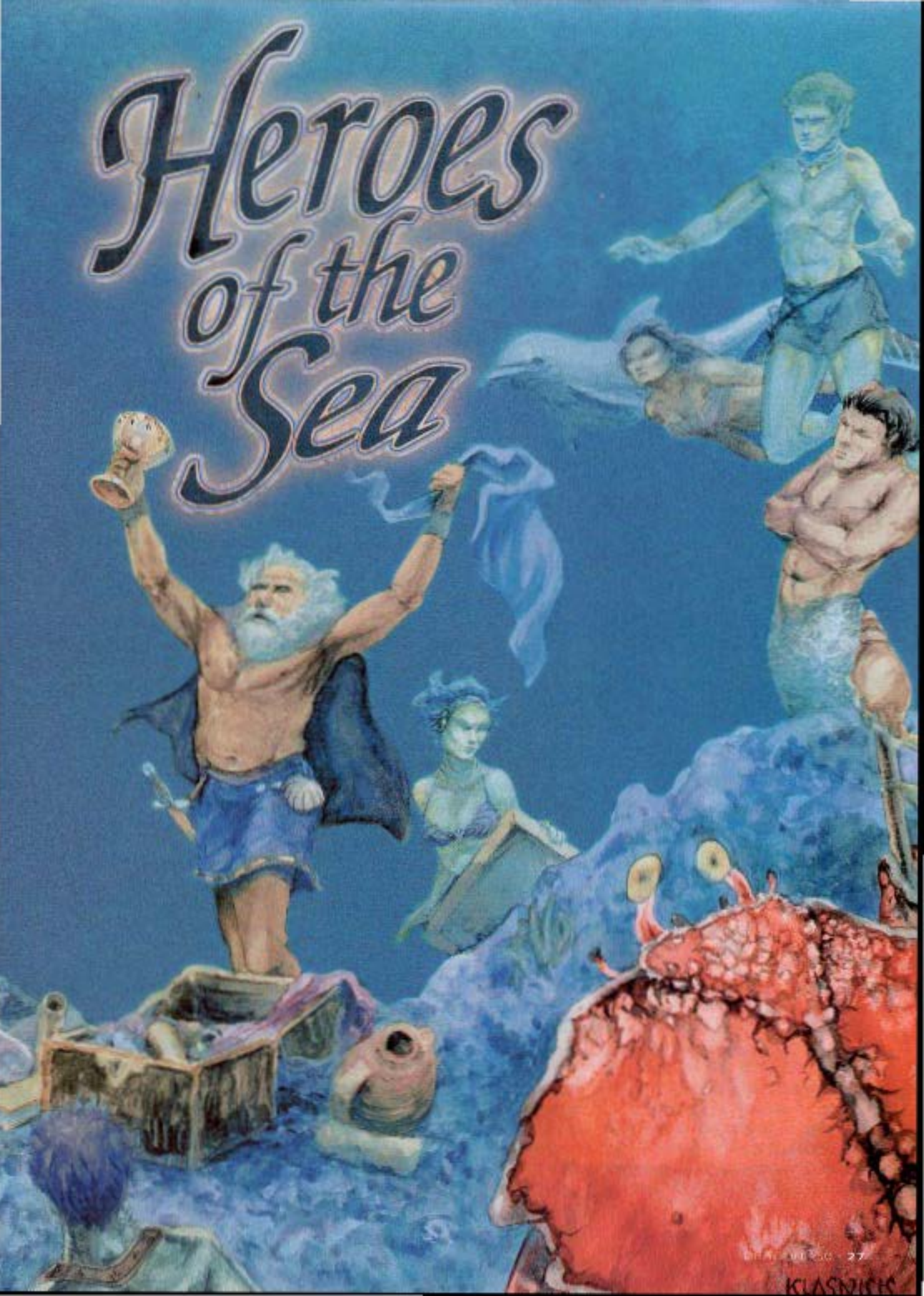


The *Complete Book of Humanoids* broke a long-standing barrier in the AD&D® game by allowing players to make characters of nearly any humanoid race. At last, centaurs, aarakocra, and even orcs and goblins were represented among the ranks of the great heroes of the multiverse. Humanoid monsters such as minotaurs might possess great advantages of strength over other PCs, but the *Complete Book of Humanoids* carefully balances such advantages against substantial disadvantages, mostly in the form of human (and demi-human) prejudice and humanoid superstition.


Heroes
of the
Sea

The seas are not only a setting for high adventure but also another source for heroes. While aquatic elves have already been covered as a character race (in the *Complete Book of Elves* and *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers),* here are rules for playing crabmen, koalinth, locathah, malenti, merfolk, pahari, selkies, and vodyanoi in the same format used in the *Complete Book of Humanoids.* Like all humanoid characters, members of these races face prejudice as well as physical limitations when trying to interact with surface dwellers. They are also shackled by superstitions that can hinder them in an adventure.

Following the familiar aquatic humanoids is a new demihuman—the liminal, crossbreeds of humans and merfolk. Liminals are not subject to the limitations of humanoid characters but still do not entirely fit in to land-dwelling culture. They are described in the same format as the other demihuman races in the *Player's Handbook,* with optional rules for using them with the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers* system of character reaction.

Two additional pieces of information are included for each race: maximum functioning depth and vision. Maximum functioning depth is the normal maximum depth at which members of each race can go about their normal activities, as described on pages 76-77 of *Of Ships & the Sea.* The entry for vision provides a multiple to normal human underwater vision, which is shown on Tables 39-41 in *Of Ships and the Sea.* Sahuagin, as described in *The Sea Devils,* can see about three times farther than humans underwater, so they have a vision multiplier of 3 (as do the malenti, described below). This multiplier is applied not only to actual vision ranges but also to depth modifiers. For example, in clear water humans lose one surface condition category per 50 feet of depth-from Clear Day to Overcast, for example. For sahuagin, the category is shifted every 150 feet of depth. For pahari, with a vision modifier of 2.5, the condition category is worsened every 125 feet of depth. All of the races described in this article use the "Marine Creature" column on Table 42: Underwater Hearing Ranges in *Of Ships and the Sea.*

Crabmen

Ability Score Adjustments. Crabmen are strong and hardy (receiving a +1 bonus to their Strength and Constitution scores), but they are somewhat slow-witted, socially backward, and unattractive to other races (-1 to Intelligence and Charisma).

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	8	18
Dexterity	3	17
Constitution	9	18
Intelligence	3	13
Wisdom	3	15
Charisma	3	17

Class Restrictions

Class	Max. Level
Warrior	
Fighter	12
Priest	
Shaman	9

Crabmen may be multiclassed as fighter/shamans.

Hit Dice. PC crabmen receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Crabmen tend toward neutrality. PC crabmen may be of any alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 4. Crabmen cannot wear armor.

Background. Crabmen are humanoid crustaceans native to seacoasts in temperate to tropical climes. Unlike their smaller crustacean cousins, crabmen have only three pairs of limbs—two legs on which they walk upright, two short arms with small claws for manipulation, and two longer arms with thick, heavy claws. They have a hard exoskeleton covering their entire body, extended into a large shell on their backs. Males tend toward bright red or orange coloration, while females are usually red-brown, green, or black. They have two eyestalks that can extend a foot out from their bodies or retract completely inside their shells. They also have four feelers, two very long and two short, that they use to assist their weak eyes in sensing their environment. They have been known to reach sizes as large as 10 feet tall, but 7-8 feet is their more common stature.

Crabmen live in tribes that migrate from beach to beach with the change of seasons. On sand and in shallow coastal waters, they subsist by scavenging carrion and gathering algae, only occasionally capturing live prey. They make seasonal homes in sea caves on the coast, sometimes extending the natural caverns into extensive burrow complexes.

Languages. Crabman. When speaking other languages, crabmen can be very difficult to understand because of the hisses and clicks they insert even when speaking another language.

Roleplaying Suggestions. It usually requires extraordinary circumstances to bring a crabman character in contact with a party of humans and demihumans for even a short mission. Some crabmen are very inquisitive, but even they tend to distrust the "out-of-shell-people" and steer clear of them.

Crabmen are primitive by human standards, living in the equivalent of a hunting-gathering society. They have no concept of money, and while they like shiny metal, they cannot distinguish between different silver-colored metals. They often work metal into elaborate sculptures, incorporating driftwood, seashells, and other scavenged items into the overall designs. PC crabmen are likely to bewilder their companions with their complete disregard for human standards of value.

Special Advantages. Crabmen are amphibious, able to move on land (MV 9) or underwater (MV 6) with equal ease, and to breathe either air or water at will. Crabmen can attack with their claws twice per round, inflicting 1-6 hp damage with each hit.

Special Disadvantages. Crabmen cannot use weapons or wear armor. They are completely different from humans in physiology and mentality, and they are somewhat xenophobic. The normal social hindrances that face humanoid characters should be even more problematic for crabmen.

Monstrous Traits. Monstrous appearance, difficulty communicating.

Superstitions. Crabmen are very religious and inclined to see omens from their deities just about everywhere.

Weapon Proficiencies: None. Crabmen cannot use weapons in their claws.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, ancient history (crabmen), animal lore, artistic ability (sculpture, woodcarving),

blind-fighting, chanting, danger sense, direction sense, eating, fortune telling, hiding, intimidation, local history, natural fighting, poetry, religion, survival (aquatic), weather sense, weaving, whistling/ humming, wild fighting.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, wilderness protector, (priest) oracle, wandering mystic.

Average Height and Weight: *Height:* 96/84 + 2d12. *Weight:* 200/180 + 4d12.

Age: *Starting Age:* 3 + 1d4. *Maximum Age Range:* 15+2d4. *Average Maximum Age:* 20. *Middle Age:* 7 years. *Old Age:* 10 years. *Venerable:* 15 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 500: feet.

Vision: x1.25

Note: The adventure "Back to the Beach," by Willie Walsh *(DUNGEON® Adventures* #50), presents an excellent portrayal of crabman culture and human reaction to these creatures.

Koalinth

These aquatic hobgoblins are suitable for use as PCs in any campaign.

Ability Score Adjustments. Koalinth receive a -1 penalty to their initially generated Charisma scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	6	18
Dexterity	6	18
Constitution	5	18
Intelligence	3	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	3	14

Class Restrictions

	Class	Max. Level
Warrior		
	Fighter	11
Priest		
	Cleric	9
	Shaman	7
	Witch Doctor	7

Hit Dice. PC koalinth receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Koalinth tend toward lawful evil alignment. PC koalinth may be of any alignment but are usually lawful neutral.

Natural Armor Class. 10.

Background. Koalinth are marine creatures closely related to surface-dwelling hobgoblins. They stand about 6' 6" tall, with sleek, muscular bodies. Their fingers and toes are webbed, and they have gill slits in their necks. Their skin is light green and covered with patches of dark green, aqua, or blue hair. Their faces have been compared to seals', and large male koalinth have enlarged noses like elephant seals. Male koalinth also share the aggressive behavior and loud bellow of elephant seals.

Koalinth, like surface-dwelling hobgoblins, live in a rigidly organized, militaristic society. Their tribes are fiercely territorial and war with each other and with other aquatic races when their territory is compromised. They make their homes in caverns in shallow waters, ranging from subarctic to tropical seas.

Languages. Koalinth speak a dialect of the hobgoblin tongue and may learn languages of locathah, merfolk, sahuagin, and even aquatic elves.

Roleplaying Suggestions. As with air-breathing hobgoblins, some koalinth grow tired the constant warfare that characterizes their culture and leave their tribes, often joining adventures or other wanderers. Others find their way into the wider undersea world through mercenary work. Mermen and locathah have both been known to hire koalinth mercenaries to help them fight against sahuagin and other threats. Some of these mercenaries also find homes in adventuring bands.

Any koalinth, male or female, pacifist or mercenary, has been raised in what amounts to a boot camp. The discipline of military life is a part of koalinth upbringing, integral to their identities. Even those who have renounced the warfare of their culture still think of life in military terms: conversations are attacks and counter-attacks, journeys are marches (even underwater!), and surprises are ambushes.

Special Advantages. Koalinth breathe water and can swim at a movement rate of 12. They have no movement or attack penalties when in water and receive swimming as a bonus proficiency.

Special Disadvantages. Koalinth can function fairly well on land, moving at a rate of 9. A koalinth can survive on land for a number of days equal to its Constitution score, but every two days out of water causes it to suffer a -1 penalty to its ability and proficiency scores. If a koalinth's Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score drops to 0, it dies.

Monstrous Traits. Appearance.

Superstitions. Koalinth fear fire and have a number of superstitious beliefs about giant squid.

Weapon Proficiencies: Awl pike, harpoon, javelin, military fork, partisan, ranseur, spear, spetum, and trident.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Chanting, close-quarter fighting, direction sense, hiding, intimidation, looting, religion, and wild fighting.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, pit fighter, sellsword, (priest) shaman, witch doctor, oracle, war priest, wandering mystic.

Average Height and Weight: *Height:* 72/68 + 1d8. *Weight:* 140/120 + 4d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 14 + 1d6. *Maximum Age Range:* 50 + 1d20. *Average Maximum Age:* 60. *Middle Age:* 25 years. *Old Age:* 33 years. *Venerable:* 50 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 450 feet.

Vision: x2

Locathah

Since locathah can barely move on land and suffocate quickly, they are not suited to regular land-based campaigning. They work best as NPCs. PC locathah are possible only in an underwater campaign.

Ability Score Adjustments. Locathah receive a -1 to their initially generated constitution scores and a +1 to their Intelligence scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	3	17
Dexterity	6	18
Constitution	3	17
Intelligence	8	18
Wisdom	6	18
Charisma	3	17

Class Restrictions

	Class	Max. Level
Warrior		
	Fighter	10
Priest		
	Shaman	3
	Specialty*	7
Rogue		
	Bard	10

* Locathah specialty priests worship Eadro, described in *Monster Mythology.*

Hit Dice. PC locathah receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Locathah tend toward neutrality. PC locathah may be of any alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 6.

Background. Locathah are fish-like humanoids native to tropical and subtropical waters. Their skin is covered in fine scales, ranging from ivory to pale yellow, becoming more orange near the ears and spine. Their heads are very fish-like, and their hands and feet are webbed.

Locathah migrate seasonally, venturing into cooler subtropical waters in the summer, where they breed, and returning to their elaborate castle-like lairs in tropical climes during the winter. They area a hunting and gathering society, the males hunting large fish and the females gathering aquatic vegetation. Their technology is basically stone age, though they use metal items they scavenge from shipwrecks or collect as tolls from surface-dwelling fishers.

Languages. Locathah, common, merman, koalinth, sahuagin.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Locathah tend to be almost druidic in their outlook on the world. They see everything in terms of balance; even the sea exists in a balanced tension between profound peace and furious rage, between life-giving beneficence and horrific slaughter. While not as protective of their natural environment as selkies, locathah are concerned to maintain ecological balance in their territorial waters and might become involved in adventures to protect that balance.

Locathah can be infuriating in their loyalties because of their neutrality. They are as likely to cooperate with sahuagin as with sea elves (though they are smart enough to deal cautiously with sahuagin), and they might shift their alliances as the balance of power changes. They are intelligent and thoughtful, and often take longer than humans to weigh situations and assess the possible outcomes before acting.

Special Advantages. Locathah can move in water at a rate of 12. They have no movement or attack penalties when in water, and they receive swimming as a bonus proficiency. Locathah breathe water.

Special Disadvantages. Locathah can barely move on land, being unable to support their weight. They move at a rate of 1, which represents a crawl—locathah cannot stand upright out of the water unless aided by magic such as *fly* or *levitate.* After 10 turns out of the water, locathahs' gills become so dry that they begin to suffer damage at the rate of 1 point per round. Immersion in water stops this process but does not restore lost hit points. A spell such as *air breathing* or *watery air* prevents this effect.

Monstrous Traits. Monstrous appearance, bestial odor (above water).

Superstitions. Locathah fear fire and lightning, as well as being out of the water.

Weapon Proficiencies: Lance, crossbow, trident, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Agriculture (aquatic), ancient history (locathah), animal handling (eels and jellyfish), animal lore, animal training (eels), artistic ability (coral carving, jewelry-making), blind-fighting, bowyer/fletcher, chanting, craft instrument, danger sense, direction sense, eating, fortune telling, gaming, herbalism, hunting, local history, mining, musical instrument (conch), observation, poetry, religion, sea-based riding (giant eel), singing, survival (aquatic).

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, sellsword, (priest) shaman, oracle, wandering mystic, (rogue) humanoid bard.

Average Height and Weight: Height: 60/60 + 1d12; Weight: 140/140+6d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 15 + 1d4. *Maximum Age Range:* 50 + 2d12. *Average Maximum Age:* 65. *Middle Age:* 25 years. *Old Age:* 33 years. *Venerable:* 50 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 1,000 feet.

Vision: x2.5

Malenti

Malenti, like aquatic elves, can venture out of the water for days at a time. This pains and weakens them, however, and for that reason they are best suited for a completely aquatic campaign.

Ability Score Adjustments. Malenti receive a +1 bonus to their Dexterity scores but suffer a -1 penalty to Constitution.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	3	18
Dexterity	6	19
Constitution	7	17
Intelligence	8	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	7	18

Class Restrictions

	Class	Max. Level
Warrior		
	Fighter	12
	Ranger	15
Priest		
	Cleric	8

Hit Dice. PC malenti receive hit dice by class. In addition, they receive 2 bonus hit points at first level.

Alignment. Malenti tend toward chaotic evil alignment. PC malenti are assumed to be rebels and outcasts from sahuagin society and may be of any chaotic alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 6

Background. Malenti are a mutant for of sahuagin, born when a sea elf community is located within 100 miles of their sahuagin lair (see *The Sea Devils,* pages 12-16). Though they are sahuagin in every other way, they look exactly like sea elves. Most malenti are fed to the sharks at the instant of hatching, but some are occasionally reared as scouts and spies to aid the sahuagin in their warfare against the aquatic elves.

Languages. Sahuagin, aquatic elf, common.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Most malenti either are the victims of infanticide or else are so completely indoctrinated in the sahuagin worldview that it is impossible to imagine them being anything but bloodthirsty assassins, according to their training. However, mythology is full of heroes who were meant to be the victims of infanticide, and it is possible that a malenti child might survive to adulthood against all odds. A player wishing to play a malenti PC should be encouraged to describe some outrageous way in which his character survived in infancy. (Perhaps he was fed to the sharks, but one of the

sharks was a wereshark who sheltered the child for his own purposes.) Of course, some malenti leave sahuagin society upon discovering that their sahuagin fellows really believe them to be disgusting freaks, and these malenti have been known to join or form malenti communities. A PC malenti could also come from such a community.

Regardless of their history, malenti are outcasts—not only from sahuagin life but from every aquatic culture. No one will ever treat a malenti with dignity or respect—at least, that is what malenti believe. They are complete loners, trusting no one and relying on no one. This certainly makes them excellent spies, scouts, and assassins, but they tend to have difficulty fitting in even in adventuring bands. Cooperation and team spirit are foreign concepts to a malenti, and the idea of friendship is impossible to comprehend.

Special Advantages. Malenti can swim at a movement rate of 18. They breathe water and suffer no movement or attack penalties underwater.

Malenti share the keen senses of other sahuagin. They can detect the presence of invisible creatures underwater within a 15′ radius, attacking such creatures with only a -2 penalty. They see underwater as well as sahuagin do, or about three times as far as surface-dwellers.

Malenti have retractable claws on their hands and feet, as well as powerful bites, allowing them up to 5 natural attacks per round. They inflict 1-2 hp damage with their hands, 1-4 with their feet, and 1-3 with a successful bite. When fighting in the company of other sahuagin, malenti may enter a blood frenzy as described in *The Sea Devils.*

Special Disadvantages. Malenti are at a disadvantage when out of the water. A malenti can survive on land for a number of days equal to its Constitution score, but every two days out of water causes the creature to suffer a -1 penalty to its ability and proficiency scores. If a malenti's Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score drops to 0, the creature dies.

Monstrous Traits. Bestial eating habits.

Superstitions. Malenti fear magic and dread failure.

Weapon Proficiencies: Trident, net, spear, dart, javelin, crossbow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Acting, alertness, ancient history (sahuagin), animal handling (sharks), animal lore, animal training (sharks), blind-fighting, close-quarter fighting, danger sense, direction sense, eating, endurance, etiquette, fast-talking, hiding, hunting, intimidation, languages, local history, natural fighting, observation, religion, sea-based riding, survival (aquatic), voice mimicry, wild fighting.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, sellsword, wilderness protector, (priest) oracle, war priest, wandering mystic.

Note that malenti rangers, while they must take the humanoid wilderness protector kit, do not receive tracking as a bonus proficiency. They receive survival—aquatic instead of survival—woodlands but otherwise conform to the kit description presented in the *Complete Book of Humanoids.*

Average Height and Weight: Height: 50/50 + 1d8. Weight: 85/75 + 2d12.

Age: *Starting Age:* 20 + 1d4. *Maximum Age Range:* 150+2d20. Average *Maximum Age:* 170. *Middle Age:* 75 years. *Old Age:* 100 years. *Venerable:* 150 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 1,500 feet.

Vision: x3

Merfolk

Since merfolk can barely move on land and suffocate quickly, they are not suited to regular, land-based campaigning. They work best as NPCs. PC merfolk are possible only in an underwater campaign.

Ability Score Adjustments. Merfolk have no ability score adjustments.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	3	18
Dexterity	3	18
Constitution	3	18
Intelligence	3	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	3	18

Class Restrictions

Class	Max. Level
Warrior	
Fighter	12
Priest	
Shaman	3
Specialty*	7
Rogue	
Bard	9 (female only)

* Merman specialty priests worship Eadro, described in *Monster Mythology.*

Hit Dice. PC merfolk receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Merfolk tend toward neutrality. PC merfolk may be of any alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 7

Background. Merfolk are the most common of the aquatic humanoid races, found throughout temperate ocean waters. They have the upper torso of a human, with light skin and brown hair. Below the navel, their bodies taper into a long, fish-like tail covered with green to silver scales.

Merfolk live in sedentary communities, dwelling in passages carved into cliffs or coral reefs. They herd fish and hunt larger fishes, and they are fiercely protective of their territory. They are generally not friendly with surface dwellers or other aquatic races, keeping to themselves and refusing trade.

Languages. Merman, locathah, common.

Roleplaying Suggestions. While the locathah are almost druidic in their concern for balance, merfolk are neutral because they are so insular. They do not care about good or evil; they care only about their communities and their race, and they prefer to be left alone. Merfolk adventurers are often frustrated by this head-in-the-sand attitude and leave their communities to face threats or explore regions that their kinsfolk would prefer simply to ignore.

Mermaids, by far the more creative gender, are more likely to leave their villages, at least in part to escape their menial role in merfolk society.

Special Advantages. Merfolk swim at a rate of 18. They have no movement or attack penalties when in water and receive swimming as a bonus proficiency. Merfolk breathe water.

Special Disadvantages. Merfolk can barely move on land, inching along at a rate of 1. After an hour out of the water, merfolk begin to dehydrate, losing 2 hit points per hour. Immersion in water stops this process but does not restore lost hit points.

Merfolk suffer double damage from fire and are instinctively terrified of it.

Monstrous Traits. Monstrous appearance, bestial fear.

Superstitions. Merfolk fear fire.

Weapon Proficiencies: Crossbow, trident, javelin.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, animal handling, animal lore, animal training (fish), bowyer/fletcher, danger sense, direction sense, gaming, hunting, local history, mining, religion, survival (aquatic). *Females only:* Artistic ability (shell carving, tapestry weaving), chanting, poetry, singing, weaving.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, (priest) shaman, oracle, wandering mystic, (rogue) humanoid bard.

Average Height and Weight: *Height:* 60/54 + 1d12. *Weight:* 145/80 + 8d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 15 + 1d4. *Maximum Age Range:* 90+2d20. *Average Maximum Age:* 110. *Middle Age:* 45 years. *Old Age:* 60 years. *Venerable:* 90 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 1,100 feet.

Vision: x2

Pahari

Ability Score Adjustments. Pahari PCs receive a +2 to their Intelligence scores, a -1 to their Wisdom scores, and a -1 to their Dexterity scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	3	18
Dexterity	3	17
Constitution	3	18
Intelligence	3	18
Wisdom	3	17
Charisma	3	18

Class Restrictions

Class	Max. Level
Wizard	
Mage	14
Elementalist	14
Rogue	
Bard	15

Hit Dice. PC pahari receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Pahari tend toward chaotic good alignment. PC pahari may be of any good alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 7

Background. Pahari are aquatic nymphs similar to merfolk, native to the tropical seas around Arabian lands such as Zakhara. In natural form, they look similar to mermaids, with the upper body of a beautiful woman changing to the body of a bright tropical fish below the waist. They can also change into two other forms: a foot-long tropical fish or a normal-seeming human woman.

Pahari live in small communities, dwelling in homes made of shells and coral in shallow coastal waters. They are fascinated with the surface world, and braver pahari often venture onto land in human form to experience life up on the shore. They have been known to take human husbands but, being faerie creatures, invariably outlive their mates and return, heartbroken, to their undersea communities.

Languages. Pahari, common, fish, nereid, dolphin, reef giant, whale, zaratan.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Adventuring pahari are usually young women who are insatiably curious about the world around them. Often they are pahari who have fallen in love with a land-dwelling adventurer and join him on his travels. They savor all the strange elements of life on the land, enjoying the food, the dancing, and sailor's songs. They throw themselves into life with a passion that is to be admired, especially

considering that most such pahari have only heartbreak to look forward to when their husbands age and die.

Pahari are passionate about the preservation of their aquatic homes, and use all their powers to oppose evil creatures who threaten their communities.

Special Advantages. Pahari can change freely among their three different forms. In natural form (half-human, half-fish), they swim at a rate of 18. In fish form, they swim at 24. In either form, they have no movement or attack penalties when in water. Pahari receive swimming as a bonus proficiency. Pahari can breathe water or air with equal ease in their natural form but can breathe only in water while in fish form and only in air while in human form.

Pahari have a magic resistance of 5% per level, up to a maximum of 25% at 5th level. A pahari of 3rd level or above can bestow *water breathing* with a kiss, at will, which lasts for a day.

Special Disadvantages. Pahari are peaceful and unaccustomed to using weapons, and therefore can never learn a weapon proficiency. Any attacks with a weapon are made with the appropriate non-proficiency penalty, depending on the pahari's class.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability.

Superstitions. Pahari look to the sea for signs and omens.

Weapon Proficiencies: None. Pahari do not learn the use of weapons (see Special Disadvantages, above).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Pahari may select any appropriate nonweapon proficiencies, including those listed in the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook.

Available Kits: Pahari are free to select human kits appropriate for wizards or bards. At the DM's discretion and depending on the campaign, pahari may be required to use Zakharan kits from the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook.

Average Height and Weight: (in natural form) *Height:* 60 + 1d12. *Weight:* 125 + 8d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 50 + 5d6. *Maximum Age Range:* 250 + 2d100. *Average Maximum Age:* 350. *Middle Age:* 125 years. *Old Age:* 167 years. *Venerable:* 250 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 700 feet.

Vision: x2.5

Selkies

Ability Score Adjustments. In human form, selkies are very attractive. Whatever their form, they have winning personalities. They tend to be small and lithe, however, and are not the strongest of folk in either form. PC selkies add 1 to their Charisma scores and subtract 1 from their Strength rolls.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	3	17
Dexterity	3	18
Constitution	3	18
Intelligence	8	18
Wisdom	6	18
Charisma	8	18

Class Restrictions

	Class	Max. Level
Warrior		
	Fighter	8
	Ranger	8
Wizard		
	Mage	10
Priest		
	Shaman*	5
Rogue		
	Bard	12

Selkies may be multi-classed as fighter/mages, fighter/shamans, or ranger/shamans.

* Selkie shamans worship Surminare, described in *Monster Mythology*.

Hit Dice. PC selkies receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Selkies tend toward neutrality with strong leanings toward good. PC selkies may be of any alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 5 (10 in human form).

Background. Selkies are a race of shapechanging humanoids native to arctic and subarctic waters. In their natural form, selkies are nearly indistinguishable from normal seals. They do have hands (with webbed fingers) instead of fore flippers, and their legs remain somewhat separate, though still very well-adapted for swimming. Most selkies can take human form once a month for no longer than a week. Certain rare selkies, through exceptional abilities or simply exceptional desire, are able to assume their human form at will and maintain it indefinitely All PC selkies are assumed to fall into this category. The human forms of selkies are unique to the individual, tending toward rich tan skin, black or gray hair, and bright-colored eyes—emerald green or light blue. They live to about 80 years.

Languages. Selkie, common.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Most selkie adventures are movitated by sheer curiosity about the "overworld," and move about in human guise to learn the customs of their land-dwelling neigbors. Such characters will be inquisitive in the extreme and very imitative of human mannerisms and customs.

Other selkies are moved to spend more time on land out of concern for their environment. These selkies try to pass as humans to influence the policies of human communities with regard to the selkies' native habitat. they tend to possess a crusader mentality and are only as friendly with the overworlders as they need to be to accomplish their goals.

Special Advantages. In their natural form, selkies can move in water at a rate of 36. They have no movement or attack penalties when in water and receive swimming as a bonus proficiency.

Selkies in their natural form do not breathe water, unlike other aquatic races. They can hold their breath for very long periods, however: a base of 45 minutes, plus twice the character's Constitution score. Modifiers from the *Player's Handbook* apply to the addition, not to the base. Thus, a selkie character with a 15 Constitution could normally hold her breath for 75 minutes (45 + [15 x 2]). If she were exerting herself, the time would be reduced to 60 minutes (halving the addition). If unable to get a good gulp of air, her time underwater would be reduced to 60 minutes normally or 53 minutes (45 + [15/2], rounding up) if she were also exerting herself.

Special Disadvantages. Humans tend to view selkies with a great deal of fear and superstition, confusing them with seawolves and other horrible lycanthropes. Any selkie whose true nature is discovered by a human community is in life-threatening danger.

Selkie PCs, unaccustomed to using weapons, receive only half the initial number of weapon proficiencies they

would normally receive based on their class. Any bonus proficiencies from their kit are received normally, however.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability, taste for raw fish, suseptibility to intoxicants.

Superstitions. Selkies tend to fear fire and heat.

Weapon Proficiencies: Sword, trident, harpoon, cutlass.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Natural fighting, navigation, poetry, singing, storytelling, weather sense.

Available Kits: (Warrior) sellsword, tribal defender, wilderness protector, (wizard) hedge wizard, humanoid scholar, (priest) shaman, (rogue) humanoid bard.

Note that selkie rangers, while they must take the humanoid wilderness protector kit, do not receive tracking as a bonus proficiency. They receive survival—aquatic instead of survival—woodlands, but otherwise conform to the kit description presented in *The Complete Book of Humanoids.*

Average Height and Weight: *Height:* 60/54 + 1d12. *Weight:* 145/80 + 8d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 15 + 1d4. *Maximum Age Range:* 90 + 2d20. *Average Maximum Age:* 110. *Middle Age:* 45 years. *Old Age:* 60 years. *Venerable:* 90 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 1,500 feet.

Vision: x2

Vodyanoi

Ability Score Adjustments. Vodyanoi receive a +2 to their initial Strength and Constitution scores, and a -2 to their Dexterity and Charisma scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	14	20
Dexterity	3	12
Constitution	13	20
Intelligence	3	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	3	12

Class Restrictions

Class	Max. Level
Warrior	
Fighter	12
Priest	
Shaman	3

Hit Dice. PC vodyanoi receive hit dice by class. In addition, they receive 8 additional hit points at first level.

Alignment. Vodyanoi are normally chaotic evil. PC vodyanoi may be of any chaotic alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 2.

Background. Vodyanoi are a rare and mysterious race, aquatic relatives of umber hulks. They are most common in deep freshwater lakes but are occasionally found in saltwater as well, usually living in caves near the edge of a continental shelf or deep trench. They appear similar to their land-bound cousins but are slightly larger, reaching as tall as 10 feet (and nearly 7 feet wide). Their slimy green skin covers enormous muscles. Their long arms end in webbed claws, as do their shorter legs. Their faces have two small, black eyes and large mandibles that allow them to bite through shark hide or even clam shells.

Vodyanoi are solitary, living and hunting alone at points where shallower waters meet the deeps. They are no more monsters, however, possessing average human intelligence. They may gather periodically to meet and mate—legends tell of great vodyanoi meeting grounds deep in the ocean trenches—and they can communicate with each other over tremendous distances in their low, rumbling language.

Languages. Vodyanoi speak a dialect of the umber hulk language. They are capable of learning common, sahuagin, locathah, merman, and triton.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Most vodyanoi are bloodthirsty marauders who prey upon other undersea communities to take what they want. A few have renounced this evil existence and taken up a more peaceful lifestyle. These unusual vodyanoi often live as hermits in deeper waters, while some find their fulfillment in an adventuring life.

Though reasonably intelligent, the vodyanoi are not profound thinkers. They tend to see even complex situations in simple terms and value physical prowess over intellect or culture. Even vodyanoi who join an adventuring band remain loners at heart, always valuing their own interests more than the concerns of any group.

Special Advantages. Vodyanoi breathe water and can swim at a movement rate of 6. They suffer no movement or attack penalties underwater, being native to the aquatic environment.

Vodyanoi have huge claws and powerful jaws like their land-dwelling cousins. They can attack with both claws and a bite in a single round, inflicting 3-12 hp damage with each successful claw attack and 1-10 hp damage with a successful bite.

Vodyanoi have the ability to summon electric eels. A vodyanoi can attempt this summoning once per day, with a chance of success equal to 10% + 5% per level; 1d4 eels per level of the vodyanoi respond to the summons if successful.

Special Disadvantages. Vodyanoi are lumbering brutes, though gifted with average intelligence. They are large creatures and suffer damage appropriately. Their claws make them incapable of any sort of fine manipulation, and their bulk makes it impossible for them to wear armor. They disdain the use of weapons other than their natural armament.

Vodyanoi move at a crawl (MV 3) on land and suffer the effects of dehydration if they remain out of water for more than an hour. Each hour after the first that a vodyanoi remains out of the water, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and must make a Constitution check or suffer 1d8 hp damage.

Monstrous Traits. Monstrous appearance, size, monstrous appetite.

Superstitions. Vodyanoi have a superstitious fear of large whales.

Weapon Proficiencies: None.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, animal noise, blind-fighting, chanting, close-quarter fighting, danger sense, direction sense, eating, endurance, intimidation, looting, natural fighting, survival (aquatic), wild fighting.

Available Kits. (Warrior) pit fighter, sellsword, (priest) shaman.

Average Height and Weight: *Height:* 108/102+1d12. *Weight:* 800/750 + 8d10.

Age: *Starting Age:* 12 + 3d6. *Maximum Age Range:* 150 + 1d100. *Average Maximum Age:* 200. *Middle Age:* 75 years. *Old Age:* 100 years. *Venerable:* 150 years.

Maximum Functioning Depth: 1,300 feet.

Vision: x2.5

Liminals

Liminals are descended from ancient unions between humans and merfolk. Unlike the other sea races, they are not considered humanoids and do not suffer the disadvantages of humanoid characters. Liminals appear similar to humans, with rich golden-colored skin and light brown or blond hair. They have gill slits in their throats and bright-colored eyes of yellow, blue, or green. Their fingers and toes are partially webbed.

Liminals are insightful and outgoing, receiving a +1 to Wisdom and Charisma. However, they are frail, suffering a -2 penalty to Constitution.

Liminal characters can be fighters (up to 14th level), rangers (up to 15th level), mages (up to 12th level), thieves (limit 12th level), or bards (no level limit). Liminals may be multi-classed as fighter/mages, fighter/thieves, ranger/mages, or mage/ thieves.

Liminals can breathe in air or water and receive the swimming proficiency as a bonus. They swim at their full normal movement rate (a base of 12). Their maximum functioning depth is 700 feet, and their underwater vision is 1.5 times human vision. Liminals must keep their gills damp and are particularly susceptible to dehydration while on land. Liminals must drink twice as much water in a day as other characters or suffer penalties for dehydration.

Liminals receive a +1 bonus to their attack rolls when using a trident, the preferred weapon of their race.

Liminals are close with the animals of the sea, being somewhat outcast from the society of other demihumans. Liminals have the innate ability to bond with aquatic mammals (dolphins, otters, seals, etc.), befriending one such animal at a time as a pet. This pet must be a mammal of Size M or smaller. The liminal must spend one month with the animal while it is still young, after which the animal becomes completely loyal, following the character everywhere (in the water) and obeying simple commands. Liminals may have only one such pet at a time and must wait 100 days after the death of one pet to gain another. Choice of companions is always subject to the DM's approval.

Liminals tend to adopt the roles of merchants, diplomats, and other roles involving interaction or mediation between the cultures of the land and sea. Liminals learn from an early age that settling down on land or sea is fatal both to the individual and to the race. Liminals are encouraged to marry only other liminals, to protect the existence of their race and to maintain their cultural identity. A liminal who marries a human can no longer rely on other liminals for help.

Liminals worship an androgynous deity called Eq'aa. The ultimate ideal of their religion is the unification of two "half-breeds" into two whole, complete beings through marriage. The bond of marriage is thus vitally important to all liminals. Married liminals have a special bond similar to that between a wizard and a familiar: they can communicate telepathically at a distance of up to one mile and always know each other's exact location within the same distance. If separated beyond that distance, each partner still knows the general direction in which the other is located.

When a married liminal couple joins hands, one partner can lend power to the other, granting one of the following effects:

- An increase of 1 level in spell effects and the like, at no cost to the supporting partner.
- Shared strength, increasing one partner's Strength score by 1 for every 2 points sacrificed by the other.
- Lent health, transferring hit points from one partner to the other on a 1-to-1 basis. The receiving partner cannot have more hit points than his or her normal maximum.

The first two uses of this power last only as long as the couple holds hands.

Liminal marriages are so close that couples who are separated by more than one mile slowly waste away. Each partner loses 1 hit point per day of separation (due to loss of sleep and appetite) until they are reunited or killed.

Liminals rarely survive the death of their spouses. If one partner dies, the other immediately loses one half his or her normal maximum hit points. These hit points can be recovered normally.

Starting age for liminal characters is 15 +1d4; maximum age is 90+ 2d20. Liminals reach middle age at 45 years of age, old age at 60, and venerable at 90. Height is 62/56+1d12; weight is 145/80+8d10.

Skills & Powers for Liminals

Liminal PCs begin with 30 character points to spend on racial abilities. The basic character point cost for liminals is 25 points, which purchases the abilities listed below, leaving 5 character points for nonweapon proficiencies or additional abilities.

Liminals' Special Abilities: Animal companion, fast swimmer, trident bonus, liminal racial abilities.

If the player wishes to create a customized liminal character, abilities may be chosen from the list below. Abilities cost either 5 or 10 character points.

Animal companion (10): Described in the main text as a standard ability.

Close to the sea (5): Liminals with this ability heal faster when totally immersed in salt water. When this character is underwater, he heals 2 hp damage overnight rather than the 1 point normally healed by other races. This bonus does not apply in fresh water or out of the water.

Depth sense (5): The character can determine her approximate depth underwater on a 1-4 on 1d6.

Fast swimmer (10): Described in the main text as a standard ability

Speak with animals (10): Once a day, the liminal can use the *speak with animals* ability, as a priest of the same level. This ability works only with aquatic animals, however.

Tough hide (10): Taking after the merfolk ancestry this liminal has tough skin. The character has a natural armor class of 8. If the liminal wears armor that would improve his AC to better than 8, this ability has no effect. If the character wears armor that gives him an AC of 8 or worse, he may add a +1 bonus to her Armor Class.

Trident bonus (5): Described in the main text as a standard ability.

James Wyatt is the author of "The Maze of the Morkoth," an undersea adventure appearing in DUNGEON Adventures *#70, available in September.*

The Dimernesti

by Stephen Kenson

illustrated by Rebecca Guay

The Silvanesti saw the stars in the sky but never reached them. We saw the stars in the depths of the sea and followed them.

—*Dimernesti folk saying*

DEEP BELOW THE WAVES, IN THE OCEANS OF THE WORLD OF KRYNN, LIVE THE SEA ELVES. Their watery world seemed far away from the concerns of the surface, but the power of the dragon overlords reached even below the sea. During the events described in *Heroes of Hope*, the Dimernesti sea elves were freed from the domination of the sea dragon Brine and allowed to renew their contact with the surface world. This article provides information for DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® Narrators to include the Dimernesti in their adventures, both as heroes and supporting characters, and how to take heroes on adventures beneath the seas of Krynn.

The sea elves of Krynn are distant cousins to the land-dwelling Qualinesti, Silvanesti, and Kagonesti elves. They include two distinct groups: the Dargonesti, or "deep elves," and the Dimernesti, or "shoal elves."

The two groups grew apart from each other over the centuries, and the Dimernesti tend to consider their deep-sea cousins somewhat primitive. Sea elves inhabit the southern Courrain Ocean and the Sirrion Sea near Ansalon.

Sea elves can magically assume the forms of sea creatures. The Dimernesti assume the form of sea otters, while the Dargonesti assume dolphin form. This ability is an inherent form of alteration magic that the sea elves retained even after the departure of Chaos and old forms of magic from Krynn.

Sea elves often use their animal forms to observe the surface world without drawing too much attention to themselves. There are many legends of heroes being aided by sea creatures who later turned out to be helpful sea elves.

Sea Elf Heroes

If the Narrator allows sea elf heroes in the game, use the following information. Unless the campaign is set entirely underwater, sea elf heroes need a good reason to leave their home and adventure on land. Perhaps the hero is marked by a special destiny, has ties with the surface world (such as falling in love with a land-dweller), or is merely curious to see the world above the waves.

Description

Sea elves resemble their land cousins with their slender bodies and exceptional grace and beauty. They have sleek blue skin, ranging from pale to dark. Their hair is typically green, silvery, pale blue or (rarely) blond. Eye color is usually dark, from deep blue or green to black. Their ears are delicately pointed like those of land elves. Sea elves have webbed fingers and toes and strong, lithe bodies adapted to swimming. They usually wear clothing woven from undersea plants, decorated with shells, coral, and pearls.

Roleplaying

Sea elves tend to be shy and quiet. They share their land-dwelling cousins' love of nature, beauty, and magic. They are very quick and graceful, even out of the water. Their tendency for quiet speech stems from the fact that sounds carries more easily through water; sea elves are not used to having to speak up in order to be heard.

Sea elves are simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the surface world. They have difficulty with ideas like stairs and ladders (none are needed under water). They tend to dislike heights and find direct sunlight too bright. Dim, indoor surroundings are the most comfortable for them on land. They get along best with other elves, although they look down on their land-cousins somewhat.

Sea elves also get along fairly well with humans who understand the sea, like sailors. They dislike minotaurs and other pirates who bring violence to the seas. Most sea elves share the haughty, superior attitude of most elves toward other races.

Requirements

To qualify as a sea elf, a hero must have minimum score of 6 in Agility, Dexterity, and Perception. Sea elves have very sharp sense and must have an ability code of at least "B" in Perception.

Sea elf heroes have a maximum Strength and Endurance of 8. Armor, shields, and missile weapons are rare underwater. Sea elves have a maximum code of "C" in Agility, Dexterity, and Endurance. Most sea elves favor thrusting weapons or weapons adapted for use underwater, like the trident or the net. They wear armor of animal hide or tough, woven kelp, decorated with shells and coral.

Advantages

Sea elves can breathe water as if it were air. They can also breathe air without difficulty. A sea elf hero can use alteration magic to assume a single sea creature form at will. While in animal form, the hero has the Physique, Coordination, Damage and Defense of the animal, but normal Intellect and Essence. All clothing and equipment carried by the sea elf vanishes in animal form, reappearing when the hero returns to elf form. Dimernesti assume the form of sea otters (Ph 3, Co 7, Dmg +l, Def -2) while Dargonesti assume dolphin form (Ph 8, Co 15, Dmg +4, Def -3).

Sea elf warriors use the trident and net in battle. Using these weapons gives a sea elf a trump bonus no matter what

card is played. Sea elves also gain a trump bonus for all Perception actions underwater.

Disadvantages

Although sea elves can breathe air, they are uncomfortable being away from the sea for long periods of time. After some time on dry land, a sea elf becomes sullen and possessed of a powerful urge to return to the sea. The Narrator may decide when this sea-longing sets in, but three days or more away from the sea is generally a good guideline. Once the longing sets in, no card the sea elf plays is considered trump unless the action directly aids the elf in returning to the sea. A short time (as little as a day) spent in the sea ends the longing and restores the elf to normal.

Additionally, sea elves are not used to dealing with outsiders. No card played on a Presence action by a sea elf counts as trump, unless the Presence action involves another elf (land- or sea-dwelling).

Half Sea Elves

Half sea elves can and do exist. They tend to be stockier and more broadly build than sea elves. Their skin is usually similar to their human parent, strongly tinged with blue. Half sea elves have the ability to breathe water like their elven parent. They must meet two of the three ability requirements for sea elves, but they do not gain any of the other advantages or disadvantages. This permits half sea elves to live away from the sea for long periods of time. Although many half sea elves feel a longing for the sea, they suffer no penalty for it.

Net Attack

Difficulty: Average (8)
Action Ability: Dexterity
Opposition Ability: Agility

Sea elves (and many other sea-dwelling races) use nets in combat. A net is a Light melee weapon that does no damage but instead can be used in an attempt to entangle. Targets caught in a net cannot defend; armor adjustments to damage still apply, but not shields. Entangled targets must spend the next minute of battle untangling themselves. Should a hero be entangled, getting out requires an average Agility action. Sea elf warriors typically entangle an opponent in their net, then strike with their trident while the enemy is helpless.

History of the Dimernesti

The true origin of the sea elves is lost in the currents of the River of Time. Not even the eldest Dimernesti or Silvanesti elf can say for sure when the sea elves separated from their land-dwelling cousins to live beneath the waves.

Most scholars believe the legend that the Graystone of Gargath is responsible for the creation of the sea elves. When the Graystone escaped Gargath's tower and moved across the face of Krynn, its light touched elven sailors from Silvanost along with elves dwelling along the shore of the Sirrion Sea. These elves were filled with a great longing for the sea and dived beneath the waves, where they were transformed into sea elves, able to breathe water as easily as air. The sailors became the deep sea-dwelling Dargonesti, while the shore-dwellers became the Dimernesti. Some scholars doubt the truth of the story or offer other theories about the origin of the sea elves. All that can be said for certain is the sea elves have lived in the oceans of Krynn since the Age of Dreams.

For millennia, the sea elves lived in isolation. They did little to involve themselves in the affairs of the surface world. The Dimernesti traded sporadically with their cousins in Silvanost while the Dargonesti preferred the solitude of the deep and were rarely seen, becoming a legend among surface-folk.

The Cataclysm forever altered the face of Krynn. When the fiery mountain crashed into Istar, areas of land sank beneath the waves, and much of the shore was claimed by the sea. The undersea quakes and violent currents created by the disaster killed many sea elves. The survivors withdrew farther from the surface world, blaming land-dwellers for the Cataclysm. They took many of the undersea ruins as their own, including those that now form the outer areas of Dimernost in the Sirrion Sea.

During the Shadow Years following the Cataclysm, the sea elves were all but forgotten, save by their elven cousins in Silvanost. they became the stuff of legend to the other races of Krynn. Sailors told tall tales of spotting a sea elf, but no one could actually claim to have spoken to one. The sea elves used their animal forms to observe the surface world from time to time, remaining hidden.

The War of the Lance brought the sea elves to the attention of the surface world again. Dargonesti elves helped save some of the Heroes of the Lance when their ship was destroyed in the maelstrom at the heart of the Blood Sea of Istar. They brought the Heroes to the ruins of Istar and told them of the return of the legendary sea dragons. A Dargonesti elf named Apoletta and her human husband Zebulah then returned the Heroes to the surface world to continue their journey.

After the War of the Lance, the sea elves returned to obscurity, until the Summer of Chaos. The unleashed power of Chaos caused the seas themselves to boil, endangering the sea elves and other ocean life. But the coming of Chaos and the climax of the Chaos War were nothing to the sea elves compared to the rise of the dragon overlords and the coming of Brine in the Age of Mortals.

The sea dragon Brynseldimer (Brine) first appeared in Dimernost around 26 S.C. He used his steam breath to boil alive any elves who opposed him and smashed the coral towers of Dimernost with his mighty tail. Only the power of the legendary Crown of Tides, in the possession of the Dimernesti Speaker of the Sea, was able to keep Brine from controlling all of Dimernost. As it was, the sea dragon's reign of terror was virtually unchallenged. The Dimernesti were able to hold their own, but their position was quickly weakening and it was only a matter of time before they were forced to surrender to Brine. Calls for help sent to Silvanos went unanswered: The sea elves were on their own.

Help arrived in the form of heroes from the surface world, aboard the ship *Narwhal.* These heroes sought the Crown of Tides and fought against Brine, slaying the sea dragon in a mighty battle. The grateful Dimernesti agreed to loan the heroes the Crown and renewed their ties with the surface world. Dimernost is safe from the threat of the sea dragon, but new dangers have begun to arise in Brine's place, and the Dimernesti will need the aid of their surface allies if they are to survive and rebuild.

The Sunken Land of Dimernost

The undersea world of the Dimernesti is a place of incredible beauty and danger. Sunlight filters through the waters of the Courrain Sea and glimmers off the delicate coral towers of Dimernost. Brightly colored fish swim among the buildings and undersea plants, growing in a riot of colors, waving in the gentle currents.

Some of this legendary beauty has been scarred by the damage caused by Brine. Many of the coral towers lie in ruins, and portions of the kelp fields are scattered and torn. But the Tower of the Sea still stands in the heart of Dimernost, and the friends of the Dimernesti, the dolphins and sea otters, still frolic between the remaining buildings.

The domain of the Dimernesti lies some 500 miles from the shores of Ansalon. It includes some surface islands in the Courrain Sea. Beneath the waves, the Dimernesti holdings include the capitol of Dimernost, the towns of Santhost and Markost, ruins of Faerkel and Rabinai, the Roost (an ancient Kyrie site), the Endless Hall, and numerous sea elves throughout the Tin-Arian Peaks (known as the Sunken. Peaks to surface-dwellers).

Dimernost is an entire undersea city, built around the 200′ tall Tower of the Sea. The city radiates out from the Tower in concentric rings, out toward the kelp farms that ring the entire city like a jungle of sea-plants. Within the kelp-farm ring lie various sea-farms where the Dimernesti raise jellyfish, oysters, crabs, and other shellfish, as well as the giant sea horses they use as riding beasts. The broad open marketplace lies between the farms and the central areas of the city itself. Dimernesti traders and artisans are beginning to fill the brightly colored stalls of the market again.

The Dimernesti have begun to rebuild their shattered homes. Those driven away by Brine's rampages are slowly returning. Several thousand sea elves live in the city and surrounding area.

The ruins found near Dimernost date back to the days of the Cataclysm. The sea elves make occasional forays into them to gather useful materials and goods they can trade with surface dwellers. The sea elves have little use for gold or silver, but they know how highly surface people value the metals. Magical items are sometimes found in the ruins as well.

The difficulty in exploring the ruins is that they lie close to the Tin-Arian Peaks, which were once the heart of Brine's domain. Although the sea dragon is no more, his various minions and other deadly sea creatures live in the sea-caves and crevasses in the mountains. These include lacedons (sea ghouls), sea hags, sharks, giant octopi, and other creatures. Many who explore the Sunken Peaks do not return to tell the tale.

Personalities

Speaker of the Sea Nuqala (Dimernesti female adult, vigilant demeanor, Master) leads the people of Dimernost. Her father, the previous Speaker, was killed in one of Brine's first attacks. Nuqala does her utmost to be a good leader for her people and has devoted all of her energies to protecting and rebuilding Dimernost. She wears the Crown of Tides (described in *Heroes of Hope),* giving her great power over the sea that she uses to defend her people.

Kellishion (Qualinesti male adult, fierce demeanor, Hero) is Nuqala's bodyguard and consort. He came to Dimernost years ago searching for a peaceful haven from the endless wars of

the surface world. He found a new home and a new love in Nuqala, but peace has eluded him. Kellishion continues to use his skills as a warrior to aid Nuqala in protecting the Dimernesti and his new home from attack. Kellishion is Dimernost's prime ambassador to the surface world, since he understands their ways. Alteration magic allows Kellishion to spend most of his time living beneath the sea with his chosen people.

Veylona (Dimernesti half-elf female young adult, inquisitive demeanor, Novice) is Nuqala's young half-elf ward. She is headstrong and inquisitive, insatiably curious about her surface-world heritage. Nuqala is teaching Veylona the arts of leadership and diplomacy, but Veylona often sneaks away to learn more about the world above.

Current Happenings

The death of the sea-dragon Brine (as detailed in *Heroes of Hope)* freed the Dimernesti from the dominion of the dragon-lords. The grateful elves have renewed contact with the surface-world and have begun to trade again, making forays to the surface.

The Dimernesti have much of value to trade with the surface. In addition to plentiful seafood, kelp, shells, and similar goods, the sea elves also have access to stores of treasure from the sunken ruins in their domain. Gold, silver and other goods are traded for steel, pottery, and other goods the Dimernesti cannot make for themselves under water. Silvanost remains isolated, and Malys discourages sea-trade near her domain, but some ships are willing to make the journey, especially with the immediate threat of Brine removed.

Nuqala seeks to create ties of trade and friendship for the Dimernesti to help them rebuild and grow strong again. Trading with the surface-folk is part of this plan. Additionally, the Speaker of the Sea hopes to make contact with the Dimernesti's scattered elven cousins. Envoys and messages to the Silvanesti have received no reply thus far. Nuqala also plans to use the magic of the Endless Hall, on the outskirts of Dimernesti domain, to create a magical passage to the domain of the Dargonesti in the Sirrion Sea and to renew relations with the shoal elves' deep-sea cousins.

The Dimernesti face threats from Brine's remaining minions, particularly the lacedons and sea hags living in caves in the Tin-Arian Peaks. These and other creatures also pose a threat to shipping and trade through the area, so Nuqala has a strong interest in seeing the monsters wiped out, or at least made less of a threat. Rumors of Brine's lair hidden somewhere in the Tin-Arian Peaks draws adventurers to respond to the Speaker's call for aid. They hope to find the sea dragon's hidden treasure horde, containing goods looted from undersea ruins and shipwrecks.

Undersea Magic

Like the other people of Krynn, the sea elves lost the powers of High Sorcery and clerical magic following the Chaos War. Cut off from contact with the surface world, the sea elves have only recently learned of the new magical arts of sorcery and mysticism. Some sea elves developed "spontaneous" talents in a mystical sphere in addition to their inherent shape-shifting ability, but these individuals are rare and only barely adequate to make up for the loss of the clerics of the true gods.

With the death of Brine, Dimernost is once again open to the surface world, and the Dimernesti are beginning to learn something of the new magic.

Sorcery

The arts of sorcery are slowly being introduced to the Dimernesti. Sorcerers from the Academy of Sorcery have traveled to Dimernost aboard trading ships, and the first sorcerers are just beginning to appear among the sea elves. Naturally, hydromancy is the school of greatest interest to the Dimernesti, giving sea elf sorcerers the ability to command the waters of their home. Aeromancy has uses in dealing with surface-dwellers, such as creating bubbles of breathable air under water. Pyromancy and electromancy are all but useless in the undersea domain: Fires do not burn, and water conducts electricity far too readily, making it unpredictable and difficult to control. The other sorcerous schools find their uses beneath the waves.

Surface-world sorcerers who travel to Dimernost find no lack of willing and interested students eager to lean more about the arts of sorcery. Nuqala is considering allowing some of her people to go to the Academy of Sorcery, but she is reluctant to allow any able-bodied sea elf to leave Dimernost at such a critical time.

Mysticism

Like most of the people of Ansalon, the Dimernesti feel the gods abandoned them in their hour of need. A few priests of the traditional sea elf gods—Paladine, Branchala, and Chislev—continue to try to work their miracles for their people. Some of these priests instinctively tapped into the power of mysticism. Once the Dimernesti renewed their contact with the surface world, they learned of the Citadel of Light and the spheres of mysticism. This confirmation of faith was enough to allow many sea elf mystics to explore the nature of the inner power they had tapped into, and mysticism is now blossoming among the Dimernesti.

Animism allows sea elf mystics to communicate with and command the creatures of the sea. Alteration augments the Dimernesti's natural shape-shifting ability, allowing mystics to take on the form of other sea creatures. Healing is one of the most common mystical spheres, used to help the Dimernesti recover from the damage done by Brine and to protect the sea elves from harm.

Mentalism allows the Dimernesti to communicate with their undersea allies, the dolphins and whales.

Magical Treasures

The one kind of magic the sea elves have in abundance is the magical treasure found in undersea ruins and left over from the previous Age. These items served as the sole magic at the Dimernesti's command following the departure of Chaos and many of them, particularly the Crown of Tides, are deeply treasured.

The Crown of Tides is detailed in *Heroes of Hope.* It grants the wearer great power over the sea. The crown is worn by the Speaker of the Sea for all official business and is used to defend Dimernost from outside dangers. The power of the crown kept the sea dragon Brine at bay for years until help was able to arrive. The crown is perhaps the most powerful magical item known to the

Dimernesti, but it is by no means the only one.

Coral Dolphin
(Item of Distinction)
These enchanted statuettes of dolphins are carved from fine, white coral, small enough to fit in the palm of the hand. Once each day, upon a command from its owner, the statue becomes a real dolphin (Co 15, Ph 8, In 5, Es 7, Dmg +3, Def -2) that obeys all of the commands of the person who animated it. The dolphin remains for up to an hour, then returns to statuette form. If the dolphin is killed, it returns immediately to statue form and cannot be summoned again for a week. If the statue is broken, the item's enchantment is destroyed.

Land-and-Sea Ring
(Item of Distinction)
These magical rings are made of braided bands of silver and gold. They were first created and used by Silvanesti sailors in past Ages. The wearer of the land-and-sea ring is able to breathe water and air equally well, and can operate above or below the surface of ocean. The Dimernesti have discovered some of these rings from time to time. The rest might still be held by the Silvanesti. Sea elves have discovered that wearing a land-and-sea ring also prevents them from suffering from sea-longing when they are away from their home waters.

Tanglenet
(Item of Distinction)
These enchanted nets are used by Dimernesti warriors. They provide a +2 bonus on all entangle actions with the net and increase the difficulty of escaping from the net by +2. Legends tell of magical nets with greater bonuses and other powers, but such items have been lost to the Dimernesti, if they truly exist.

Manta Cloak
(Item of Renown)
This garment appears to be an ordinary cloak of slick leather colored white, gray, or tan. Underwater, a manta cloak allows the wearer to breathe normally and swim much like a manta ray. The cloak ripples like leathery "wings" as the wearer swims, doubling swimming speed. the cloak also has a tail spine that strikes like a weapon at the wearer's command. This is a normal melee attack for +4 damage.

Octopus Mantle
(Item of Renown)
Similar to a manta cloak (above), an octopus mantle appears like a cloak made up of wide strips of leather with a hood. Underwater, the cloak allows its wearer to breathe normally. The eight leather strips of the cloak may be used as tentacles under the wearer's mental command, able to stretch up to twice their normal length and grasp objects with a Strength of 8. The wearer can use the tentacles to grapple opponents in combat with the same Strength.

Once per day, an octopus mantle can emit a dark cloud of ink that obscures vision. A challenging Perception action is required to see anything through the ink cloud, which lasts for a minute before dispersing.

Pearl of Power
(Item of Renown)
Pearls of power are perfectly formed pearls found in a variety of colors. They provide magical power to their holders. A sorcerer or mystic holding or wearing a pearl of power reduces the cost of any spell by 4 points. This does not affect the difficulty of the spell. Only one pearl can be used at any given time.

Shell Shield
(Item of Renown)
This shield is made from half of a giant clamshell, the same size as a target shield, decorated with mystical carvings and trimmed with coral. The shield's enchantment makes it as harder than steel, providing a -7 defensive bonus.

Courrain Conch
(Item of Fame)
The Courrain Conch is a large, enchanted conch shell. It is pale pink, blue, and white on the outside, brilliantly iridescent on the inside. The shell aids in the use of the Animism sphere on sea creatures, providing a +6 bonus for all such actions, as well as 6 mysticism points for any such use of animism. The holder must blow into the conch to use it, creating a clear note that can be heard for a great distance under water (out to artillery range). The Dimernesti use the conch to herd fish as well as to command sea-creatures to protect Dimernost in times of need.

Undersea Creature Chart

Undersea Animals

Name	Co	Ph	In	Es	Dmg	Def	Special Abilities
Dolphin	15	8	5	7	+3	-2	None
Eel, electric	6	4	1	1	+2	-1	Lightning
octopus, giant	6	24	1	1	+18	-2	Camouflage
Otter, sea	7	3	2	1	+1	-2	None
Seal	5	5	2	1	+1	-2	None
Shark	12	18	1	1	+4	-2	None
Squid, giant	3	36	3	1	+34	-3	Crush
Whale, common	6	27	3	4	+20	-4	None
Whale, killer	8	20	5	6	+12	-3	None
Whale, sperm	4	40	4	4	+25	-5	None

Undersea Races

Name	Co	Ph	In	Es	Dmg	Def	Special Abilities
Ghaggler	5	4	5	5	+4	-3	Spit (acid)
Locathah	7	5	4	5	+4	-2	None
Merfolk	9	4	5	5	+4	-2	None
Sea elf	6	4	5	6	+2	-2	Alteration (self)
Sea elf hero	8	6	7	8	+4	-2	Alteration (self)
Sirine	8	8	6	8	+2	-4	Hydromancy, charm song, alteration (self)
Thanoi	6	8	3	4	+8	-3	Immune to cold/ice

Undersea Mounts

Name	Co	Ph	In	Es	Dmg	Def	Special Abilities
Eel, giant	24	12	2	2	+12	-2	None
Hippocampus	12	18	5	6	+2	-3	None
Seahorse, giant	9	10	2	2	+1	-3	None

Undersea Monsters

Name	Co	Ph	In	Es	Dmg	Def	Special Abilities
Kraken	5	54	10	9	+54	-4	Crush
Leviathan	4	60	6	8	+40	-8	None
Sea Hag	7	14	7	6	+5	-3	Charm, hydromancy
Troll, sea	6	24	4	7	+14	-4	Regenerate

Trident of the Waves

(Item of Fame)

The Trident of the Waves is made of burnished steel with a shaft of bone or ivory, smoothly spiraled like a narwhal horn. It is decorated with inset pearls. The trident is immune to the corrosive effects of salt-water. The trident provides a +11 damage bonus. This bonus is doubled against all Evil sea-creatures to +22. Additionally, any character wielding the Trident gains an automatic trump bonus to all Presence actions against Good sea-dwellers. The wielder also gains the ability to use the animism sphere of mysticism on sea-creatures only, whether the wielder is normally capable of using mysticism or not.

The Trident was wielded by Nuqala's father, the previous Speaker of the Sea, in battle against Brine. When the sea dragon killed the Speaker, he took the trident back to his lair. Nuqala hopes to recover the trident some day.

Mother of the Sea

(Item of Glory)

The Mother of the Sea is a giant pearl of power (see above) a foot in diameter. It rests at the top of the Tower of the Sea in Dimernost. The pearl serves as a sort of "battery" of magical power.

A sorcerer or mystic touching the pearl can reduce the difficulty and/or spell point cost of any spell by 10 points. The caster may split the reduction in any way desired, such as 5 points to each or all 10 points to either difficulty or cost. Dimernesti sorcerers and mystics use the Mother of the Sea in the defense of Dimernost, allowing them to cast very powerful spells without exhausting themselves.

Undersea Creatures

The underwater world holds many different creatures, from simple sea life to legendary beasts like the kraken, able to drag an entire ship to a watery grave. The sea also has many magical creatures, from the enchanting sirines to sea hags, sea dragons and different types of undead. Narrators can use the creatures described here as adversaries in adventures that take place on the waves, in the depths or along the shore of the seas of Krynn.

Undersea Animals

All of the undersea animals described on the table are identical to their real-world counterparts. Many of them are domesticated by the Dimernesti and other aquatic races, and dolphins are particular friends of the sea elves.

Undersea Races

Ghagglers are large, undersea versions of goblins. They are around six feet tall and have tough, horny, hairless skin and pointed ears. Ghagglers can spit acid at opponents in melee combat, inflicting 6 points of damage. Locathah are fish-like, primitive humanoids. They live in nomadic bands and ride giant eels as mounts. Merfolk have human upper bodies and fish-tails. Sirines are beautiful female humanoids with magical abilities. They prefer solitude and deal harshly with intruders. Thanoi are walrus-men found in the icy waters of Krynn. They are fierce and savage warriors.

Undersea Mounts

Most aquatic races prefer to swim, but they do use special mounts for long trips. Giant eels are domesticated and ridden by the locathah. Sea elves domesticate and ride both the hippocampus, a creature part-horse and part-fish, and

the giant seahorse, which is large enough to carry a saddle and rider.

Undersea Monsters

Many different monsters live in the dark depths of the sea. The kraken and leviathan are described in the *Book of the Fifth Age.* Sea hags are evil creatures that look like hideous crones draped in seaweed. They live in undersea caves and use their magical powers to lure swimmers and sailors to their doom. Sea trolls are identical to land trolls except they can breathe water and it is difficult to apply fire to stop their regeneration!

The Undead

Most aquatic undead are from drowned sailors and pirates. Lacedons are sea ghouls, with the same paralyzing ability and hunger for human flesh as their land-dwelling cousins. Sea wights are likewise the same as normal wights, and are often found in command of lesser undead like lacedons and zombies.

Adventures Beneath the Waves

Narrators can use the following ideas to send their heroes into the mysterious and dangerous waters of Krynn.

Brine's Lair

The lair of the sea dragon Brine lies hidden somewhere in the Sunken Peaks. Adventurers may be drawn to search for the lair by legends of the vast treasure horde Brine gathered from sunken ships and undersea ruins. They might also be emissaries of the Speaker of the Sea, asked to locate treasures stolen from the Dimernesti by Brine (such as the Trident of the Waves, above).

Searching for Brine's lair requires braving the hazards of the Sunken Peaks, which include hostile sea creatures and the remains of the sea dragon's minions, including lacedons, sea hags and water-trolls. If the heroes find the lair, it may be protected by traps. In its depths they find a fabulous treasure hoard, but also the broken remains of several large shells-dragon eggs that have recently hatched. Does Brine have young? And if so, where are they? Nuqala will certainly want the heroes to investigate further.

Passage to the Blood Sea

Speaker Nuqala hopes to use the magic of the Endless Hall to create a passage between Dimernost and the Blood Sea, allowing the Dimernesti to renew contact with their distant cousins, the Dargonesti. Finding the means to create the portal can involve heroes searching the undersea ruins for key magical items and lost lore. Once the portal is created, heroes can be selected to explore beyond it and guide a sea elf envoy to speak with the Dargonesti. Veylona will almost certainly insist on coming along and will probably sneak out and follow the heroes anyway if she is forbidden to go.

The heroes must discover what has become of the Dargonesti and the Blood Sea since the Chaos War. The calming of the maelstrom has changed the region. Who knows what ruins from Istar the maelstrom spewed forth before it was sealed? How will the Dargonesti greet their cousins, especially when the shoal-elves are escorted by surface-dwellers?

The Lost Treasures of Dimernost

Treasures like the Trident of the Waves and other magical items were lost by the Dimernesti during Brine's reign of terror. Most of these items have probably found their way into the sea dragon's treasure trove, but others have been lost when emissaries to the surface world or other undersea races failed to return, or with explorers lost in the ruins.

Heroes can quest to find these lost treasures and return them to Dimernost, perhaps just in time to use the treasure's powers to avert disaster.

Exploring the Ruins

The undersea ruins near Dimernost hold treasures and lore lost since the Cataclysm. Magical treasures found there would have great value in the Fifth Age. The treasures of the ruins are guarded by hostile sea creatures and the undead forms of some of the people caught in the cities when they were sunk by the Cataclysm, cursed by the gods to guard their treasures forever. The Roost, in particular, might hold strange secrets, since it is a former hold of the Kyrie.

Dimernesti in Other Settings

DMs can use much of the material presented here for sea elves in an AD&D® campaign. The sunken realm of the Dimernesti can appear in the temperate waters of any ocean, along with most of the treasures and creatures, translated into their AD&D equivalents. With few changes, the Dimernesti would fit well into the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting.

With some more adaptation, the Dimernesti can work in other AD&D settings as well. The undersea realm would make an interesting locale for the Demiplane of Dread in the RAVENLOFT® setting (particularly in conjunction with the SAGA® rules system for RAVENLOFT presented in *DRAGON® Magazine* #240). By emphasizing the role of the Speaker of the Sea and creating a royal bloodline Dimernost, the sea elves can become an unusual addition to a BIRTHRIGHT® campaign.

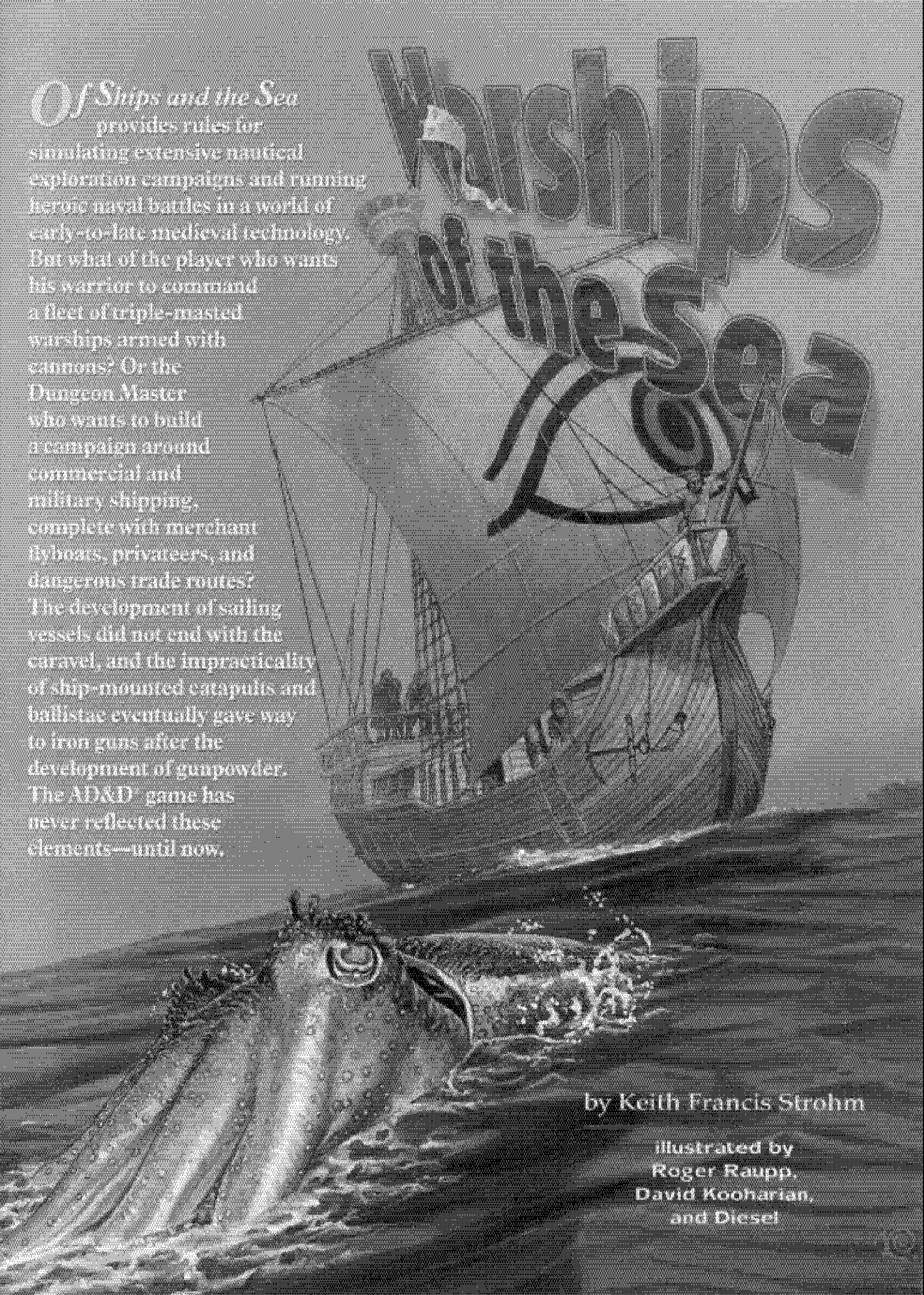
SPELLJAMMER® DMs can even use the material in this article as the basis for an entire water-covered world, where sea elves and other aquatic races fight against lacedons, sahuagin, sea dragons, and other evil creatures. Such a world might have once had land masses that were sunk by some great disaster, or it might have been settled by aquatic races from other worlds long ago. The inhabitants might never have encountered air-breathers before, in which case the arrival of the player characters can come a quite a shock!

Sea elves are found on the continent of Taladas as well. Much of the material from this article can simply be transplanted to create a sea elf civilization on the far side of Krynn.

Steve Kenson is the author of many RPG books, including the upcoming AVENGERS: Masters of Evil *adventure book for the* MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Adventure Game. *He hasn't explored too many real undewater places and tends to prefer wading pools.*

Warships of the Sea

Of Ships and the Sea provides rules for simulating extensive nautical exploration campaigns and running heroic naval battles in a world of early-to-late medieval technology. But what of the player who wants his warrior to command a fleet of triple-masted warships armed with cannons? Or the Dungeon Master who wants to build a campaign around commercial and military shipping, complete with merchant flyboats, privateers, and dangerous trade routes? The development of sailing vessels did not end with the caravel, and the impracticality of ship-mounted catapults and ballistae eventually gave way to iron guns after the development of gunpowder. The AD&D® game has never reflected these elements—until now.



by Keith Francis Strohm

illustrated by
Roger Raupp,
David Kooharian,
and Diesel

Information on sailing vessels and warships from the 14th to 19th centuries appears below. Although designed in accordance with the naval systems found in *Of Ships and the Sea,* this information is completely compatible with the core rules for ships found in Chapter 14: Time and Movement of the ***DUNGEON MASTER®*** *Guide.* Additionally, rules for cannon warfare appear at the end of this article. DMs can freely bypass these rules and still use the vessel information; they are not mutually inclusive.

Step lively! The salt road beckons, and your campaign will never be the same again.

The Ships

Historically, nautical vessels have come in many different variations. The ships below represent a few of the major designs and classes of ships. Within each of these vessel types, individual naval powers made their own modifications. For example, a Dutch galleon, while resembling an English vessel of the same model, might have very different specifications in armament, rigging, and cargo and personnel capacity. Likewise, the following ships represent a baseline upon which a DM may build, making these vessels faster or slower, more or less maneuverable, and stronger or weaker in combat-as befits the needs of the campaign.

Brigantine

The brigantine is a two-masted vessel with square rigging on the foremast and fore-and-aft rigging on the mainmast. Equipped with both oars and sails, this highly maneuverable vessel was favored by pirates in the Mediterranean Sea. (In fact, the vessel's name comes from the same root as "brigand.") Brigantines are generally 120 feet long with a beam of about 20 feet. They can carry 100 tons of cargo. Some pirate captains outfit their brigantines with rams. This addition, along with the vessel's natural maneuverability, makes the brigantine extremely dangerous at close range.

Table 1: Ship Types

Ship *Type*	Base Move/Hour	Emergency Move	Seaworthiness
Brigantine	14/6*	12	65%
Carrack	7	7	75%
Cutter	11	15	55%
Fluyt	12	6	75%
Frigate	7	9	70%
Galleass	4/7*	10	65%
Galleon**	8	7	90%
Lugger	13	20	55%
Pinnace	5	8	70%
Sloop	7	12	70%

* When a slash separates two numbers, the first represents the speed of the vessel while under sail, and the second represents the speed of the vessel while rowed.

The galleon stats listed in the ***DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide represent an earlier incarnation of that vessel. The stats above detail an 18th century galleon.

Carrack

The carrack is a three-masted ship highly valued for its capacity for large amounts of troops or cargo. Developed somewhere around the 15th century, this ship was the first square-rigged vessel to sail the seas. Although once seen as the immediate predecessor of the galleon, the carrack's design emphasizes defense rather than maneuverability or armament. The aft and forecastles of this vessel are essentially small fortresses with many archery and gun slits. This design makes the vessel highly resistant to boarding. Carracks are usually 160 feet long with a 45-foot beam. Because they often make transoceanic journeys, carracks have hold capacities of 700 tons of cargo.

Cutter

The cutter is a medium-sized, single-masted, gaff-rigged vessel that was used widely in the 18th century to patrol coastal waters or to deliver messages. Fast and maneuverable, these ships possess armament consisting of up to 12 light cannons. Despite their versatility, cutters perform poorly in adverse weather and cannot withstand a concerted attack from most warships.

Cutters are 40 feet long with a beam of 15 feet. Although they usually stay within easy sailing distance of the coastline, these vessels have a small area below decks in which the crew can sleep. Cutters have no hold to speak of and can carry only five tons of cargo.

Fluyt

Also called a "flyboat," this Dutch vessel became the most important merchant ship in northern waters during the 17th century. It is designed to carry a large amount of cargo for a minimum cost. A flat-bottomed boat with a high, ornate stern, this ship is narrow in relation to its great length. The fluyt has straight sides both fore and aft, and a very wide bow. Generally, these vessels possess one or two masts with light rigging. Because of this, the fluyt requires only a very small crew to operate.

Fluyts are nearly 200 feet long and have a beam of 30 feet. Their narrow beams and simple rigging make these ships somewhat unsteady in rough weather. Thus, they usually sail near coastlines and other areas of civilization. These ships can carry up to 800 tons in their vast holds.

Frigate

Armed with 30 guns across a single gundeck, this large vessel often escorts trade convoys or supplements the firepower of larger warships in a fleet. A fully-rigged, three-masted frigate is slightly less maneuverable than a cutter, but the ship makes up for this with greater stability.

Frigates are 140 feet long with a beam of 35 feet. Though these vessels do not have extensive holds, they can store up to 200 tons of cargo. In addition to normal crew quarters, frigates also contain barracks for 200 marines.

Table 2: Ships

	Draft	Length	Beam	Cost (gp)	Construction	Size	Crew	Passengers	Cargo	Cannons
Brigantine[1]	2	120	20	25,000	2	VL	50/30/15	60	100	L,M
Carrack	5	160	45	50,000	5	H[3]	60/30/20	300	700	All
Cutter	1	40	15	10,000	1	M	6/4/2	25	5	L
Fluyt	3	200	30	40,000	3	H	20/15/7	20	800	-
Frigate	4	140	35	45,000	4	H	40/20/10	200	200	L,M,H
Galleass[2]	5	140	30	40,000	4	H	150/95/41	100	150	L
Galleon	6	160	45	75,000	6	H	75/45/25	350	500	All
Lugger	1	45	15	15,000	1	M	10/5/3	5	10	-
Pinnace	4	130	25	35,000	3	VL	40/20/10	100	100	L,M
Sloop	2	100	30	25,000	2	VL	30/15/5	50	60	L,M

1. A brigantine's crew includes 30 rowers; 10 rowers constitute a skeleton crew, and the minimum number of rowers is 5.

2. A galleass's crew includes 120 rowers; 60 rowers constitutes a skeleton crew, and the minimum number is 30.

3. H represents a new size class of ships: Huge. Huge ships are vessels over 140 feet long, which means that the Very Large category starts at 101 feet and ends at 139 feet. The addition of a new size category changes the Hull/Crippling Points of several vessels detailed in *Of Ships and the Sea.* To modify the Hull/Crippling points of vessels in *Of Ships and the* Sea that fit in this new category, simply multiply their Seaworthiness rating by 5. Thus, a Huge dromond has 40 Hull/Crippling Points and a Manta has 90.

Draft, given in feet, is the minimum amount of water necessary to float a vessel. A ship with a 4' draft needs at least 4 feet of water in which to float. If a ship travels in an area of less depth than its required draft, it must make a Seaworthiness check or run aground.

Beam, given in feet, is a measurement of a ship's width at its most extreme point. A ship with a 20-foot beam measures 20 feet at its widest point.

Construction is the amount of time needed to build the vessel in months.

Crew represents the number of sailors and rowers on board a particular vessel. The first number in the column indicates the maximum number of crew a ship can support. The second number is the average number of crew needed to operate the ship, and the third represents the absolute minimum number of crew needed to operate the ship.

Passengers details the maximum number of extra personnel (those people not involved in operating the ship) a ship can carry. Marines count as passengers.

Cargo is the total amount of weight a ship can carry, measured in tons. Vessels can substitute one passenger for every ton of reduction. Thus, a ship with a 200-ton cargo hold could carry 200 additional passengers if it jettisoned all its cargo.

Cannons details the type of mounted weapons a ship can carry. See **Table 4: Armament** for more details.

Galleass

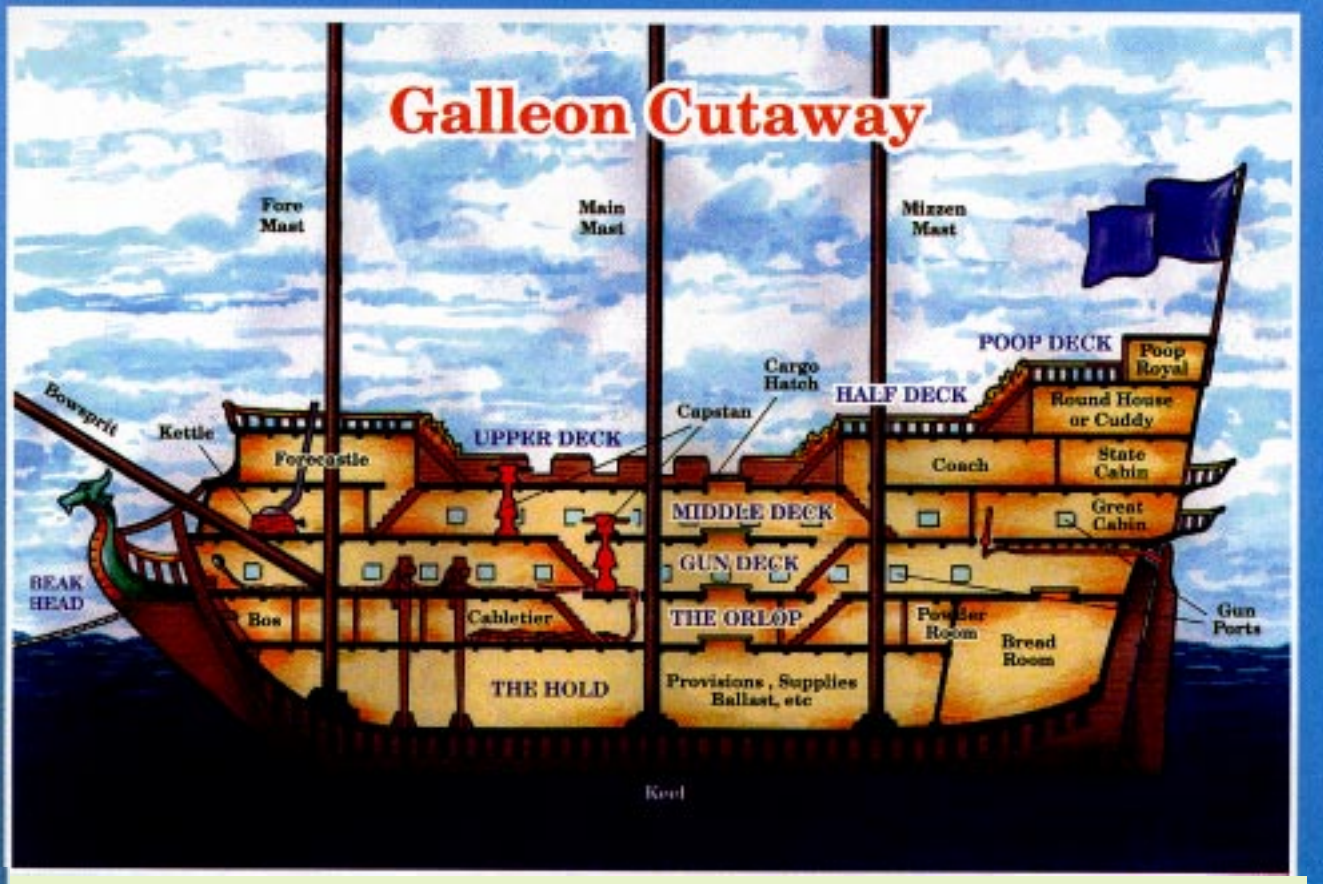
The galleass is an attempt to combine the superior seaworthiness and armament of a galleon with the speed and maneuverability of a galley. Despite many attempts at perfecting the galleass, it never really gained popularity as a warship. Early versions had the ship's guns mounted below the oarbank, requiring rowers to pull their oars out of the water and hold them above the guns for the cannons to fire. Later vessels of this type mounted up to 35 guns along the rails of the topdeck. However, these were only light cannons, as heavier armament unbalanced the galleass. The galleass has three masts and a lower deck fitted with oars.

These vessels are much more useful as freight carriers, and were widely used for this purpose during the 16th and 17th centuries. Because of their basic galley design, galleasses usually stay near coastlines. There are no quarters for crew or marines, but each galleass normally transports 100 marines when on a military expedition. Galleasses are 140 feet long with beams of 30 feet. Their hold can store up to 150 tons of cargo.

Galleon

Built similarly to a carrack, the galleon was first created by the English in the 16th century and later adopted by the Spanish navy. This ship represents one of the greatest achievements of nautical design. The galleon has four masts—square rigged except for the mizzenmast, which has a lateen rigging—and a low beak head like a galley, instead of the usual high forecastle. This low design makes the ship much more seaworthy and maneuverable, as shipbuilders had discovered that high forecastles caught the wind and forced a ship to veer off its course.

Galleons possess multiple decks along which protrude gunports and barracks for up to 150 marines, making them premiere warships; this was especially true during the 18th century, when the largest of these ships could fire up to 100 guns at a time. Because of the variation in armaments among these ships, they are divided into differing rates: The lower the rate, the larger and more powerful the vessel. The statistics given in Table 2 represent a standard 5th-rate galleon.



Although they function as men-of-war, galleons are often used for exploration, due mostly to their superior seaworthiness and available space. The average (5th rate) galleon has two decks and stretches out 160 feet in length with a 45′ beam. Its hold can store up to 500 tons of cargo.

Lugger

Similar to a brigantine, the lugger is a smaller, more maneuverable vessel used by pirates and smugglers. This ship lacks the formidable ram and mass of a brigantine, but it makes up for these faults with speed and maneuverability. Additionally, a lugger does not require a large crew, thus freeing up more personnel for boarding actions.

Luggers are 45 feet long with beams of 15 feet. Although a lugger's hold can store only 20 tons of cargo, many pirate captains fill it with additional brigands to increase the size of boarding parties. It is not uncommon for a lugger to accompany a brigantine on a raid. Additionally, the speed of the lugger makes it a perfect vessel for blockade running.

Pinnace

Another Dutch-built vessel, the pinnace appeared at the beginning of the 17th century. This vessel sports three masts and a beakhead, and it can carry up to 24 medium cannons. Historically, the frigate soon replaced the pinnace as the preferred midsize warship, but merchants continued to use the Dutch vessel for commercial sailing.

The pinnace is 120 feet long with a beam of about 25 feet. It can store up to 100 tons in its cargo hold.

Sloop

The sloop is one of the smallest warships. This vessel has two masts and usually carries 18 medium cannons. Fairly maneuverable and seaworthy, sloops often patrol coastal waters and assist larger warships in battle.

Sloops run 100 feet long with beams of 30 feet. In addition to their crew complement, these vessels have room to transport up to 60 marines. Sloops have holds capable of storing only 50 tons of cargo.

AD&D Core Rules Statistics

Table 1 lists the information necessary to use these new vessels with the rules that appear in the *DMG*.

Tables 2 and 3 offer general and combat-related statistics compatible with Of *Skips and the Sea*. A summary of the information follows the tables. Interested persons should consult *Of Ships and the Sea* directly for more detailed information.

Galleons

The galleon statistics in Tables 2 and 3 represent a 5th-rate galleon. To simulate varying rates among galleons, make the following modifications:

Increase a galleon's draft by 1 foot, its length by 10 feet, its beam by 2 feet, its cargo capacity by 50 tons, its passenger and marine complement by 20, and its number of cannons by 5 for every rate better than 5th (to a maximum of 1). Likewise, decrease these stats by the same amount for every rate below the 5th (to a maximum of 8).

Thus, a 4th-rate galleon has a draft of 7 feet, a length of 170 feet, a beam of 47 feet, a cargo capacity of 550 tons, and 85 cannons.

Table 3: Ship Combat Statistics

	Move	Seaw	Pursuit	Man.	Size	RF	Defense Class	Mar	Hull Points	Can. Type
Brigantine	36/20/16	14	1d6+14	1d6+9/1d6+10	VL	0(2)	A	60	42	10/L
Carrack[1]	21	18	1d6+6	1d6+3	H	0	A	300	90	20/H
Cutter	15	12	1d6+4	1d6+8	M	0	C	25	18	12/L
Fluyt	12	14	1d6+5	1d6+4	H	0	A	20	70	-
Frigate	18	17	1d6+6	1d6+6	H	2	A	200	85	30/H
Galleas	24/8/16	17	1d6+8	1d6+2/1d6+3	H	1	A	100	85	35/L
Galleon	24	19	1d6+8	1d6c4	H	0	A	350	95	80/H
Lugger	15	14	1d6+5	1d6 +12	M	0	C	5	21	-
Pinnace	18	15	1d6+6	1d6+5	VL	1	A	100	60	24/M
Sloop	15	16	1d6+5	1d6+7	L	0	A	60	48	18/M

1. Because they are built to withstand boarders, carracks force a -3 penalty to all enemy vessel rolls on Table 27: Boarding Action Results in *Of Ships and the Sea.*

Move details the speed of individual ships in tens of yards per melee round. The numbers separated by slashes represent the speed of vessels equipped with both sails and oars. The first number is a ship's speed under both sails and oars. The second number is a ship's speed under sails only, and the third number shows a ship's speed under oars only.

Seaw(orthiness) indicates the stability and durability of a vessel-the higher the number, the more seaworthy the vessel. To make a successful Seaworthiness check, the DM simply rolls a d20, comparing the result with the ship's rating. If the roll is greater than the Seaworthiness value, the ship founders or grounds.

Pursuit represents a ship's ability to use its speed to catch or avoid enemy ships. A vessels pursuit rating equals 1/3 its current movement rate. The entry on Table 3 is the typical value for each vessel.

Man(euverability) indicates the overall maneuverability of a ship. Vessels possessing both oars and sails have two Maneuverability ratings. The first (lower) number is the craft's maneuverability when moving under sail, even if the ship employs its oars. The second number is the vessel's maneuverability under oars.

RF, or ramming factor, refers to a vessel's ability to use its mass as an effective ram. Most ships possess numbers between 0 and 4 to indicate overall ramming ability. Vessels with ratings of 0 are not designed to ram other ships; however, their captains can still attempt to ram See page 46 in *Of Ships and the* Sea for ramming rules.

Defense Class shows how much protection against missile fire a ship offers its crew and passengers. Most large sailing ships provide Class A defense; the vessels have superstructures that give reasonable concealment, but leave sailors exposed. Large rowing vessels feature Class B defense; fewer people must brave missile fire to man the sails, but a volley of arrows can inflict considerable casualties among their rowers. Class C ships tend to be fairly small, though their crews can find some cover under the decks and rigging. Class D ships have no decking and very little rigging to provide cover from missile fire. Class X vessels are both open and very small.

Mar(ines) is the number of marines a ship can hold. (See *OSAS,* page 65, for details.)

Hull Points refers to the amount of damage a ship can withstand before cracking apart or becoming crippled.

Can./Type indicates the number of mounted weapons on board a vessel. They are divided into three categories: light (L), medium (M), and heavy (H). Note that these numbers represent the maximum armament of that craft. Ships that can mount more than 1 type of armament (see Table 2) have the option of mixing their cannon types, but they can never have more than their maximum number.

For example, a ship that has 20 heavy cannons can mount 10 medium and 10 heavy cannons.

Cargo Capacity Modifications

The ship statistics detailed in this article's tables represent craft operating at maximum efficiency. Such vessels handle quite differently when loaded down with heavy materials. To account for this difference, simply apply the following modifiers to the ship's pursuit and maneuverability rolls (see Table 3):

Cargo hold is . . .	Modifier
More than 25% full	-1
More than 50% full	-2
More than 75% full	-3
Completely full	-4

For example, the DM wants to calculate the modified handling of a pinnace carrying 30 tons of cargo. The DM checks the overall capacity of the ship on Table 2 (100 tons) and determines that more than one-quarter of the pinnace's cargo capacity is in use. Therefore, the DM reduces the ship's overall movement rate (taking into account wind conditions and any other modifiers to movement before the modification) by 2.

Cannons in Naval Combat

The use of cannons changed the face of naval combat. Opposing vessels no longer had to engage in close combat maneuvers such as ramming and boarding. Rather, cannon-armed craft turned their gun ports toward their enemies and fired until one smoking, holed ship raised the flag of surrender. Because of this, ship design became broader and heavier, and the great naval powers of the world built grand, multi-decked vessels capable of carrying a great deal of firepower and withstanding attacks from heavy artillery. Thus, frigates and higher-rate galleons became the warships of choice for the European navies of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Guns

Cannons were typically forged of iron or brass. Most navies preferred brass for their mounted weaponry, as the metal did not rust. However, the less-expensive iron guns were far more prevalent. Iron guns require an Item Saving Throw vs. Corrosion (14) for every month they are out at sea. They suffer a -1 cumulative saving throw penalty for every month at sea after their first.

Table 4: Armament summarizes the relevant game information for these weapons. DMs should feel free to modify the particulars of the table to fit their individual campaigns.

The caliber of cannons varied widely throughout various navies, ranging anywhere from 2-lb. to 50-lb. guns. Despite their names, the poundage of such guns referred to the weight of their shot, not the weapons themselves. Heavier guns simply fired heavier shot. The cannons themselves weighed several tons.

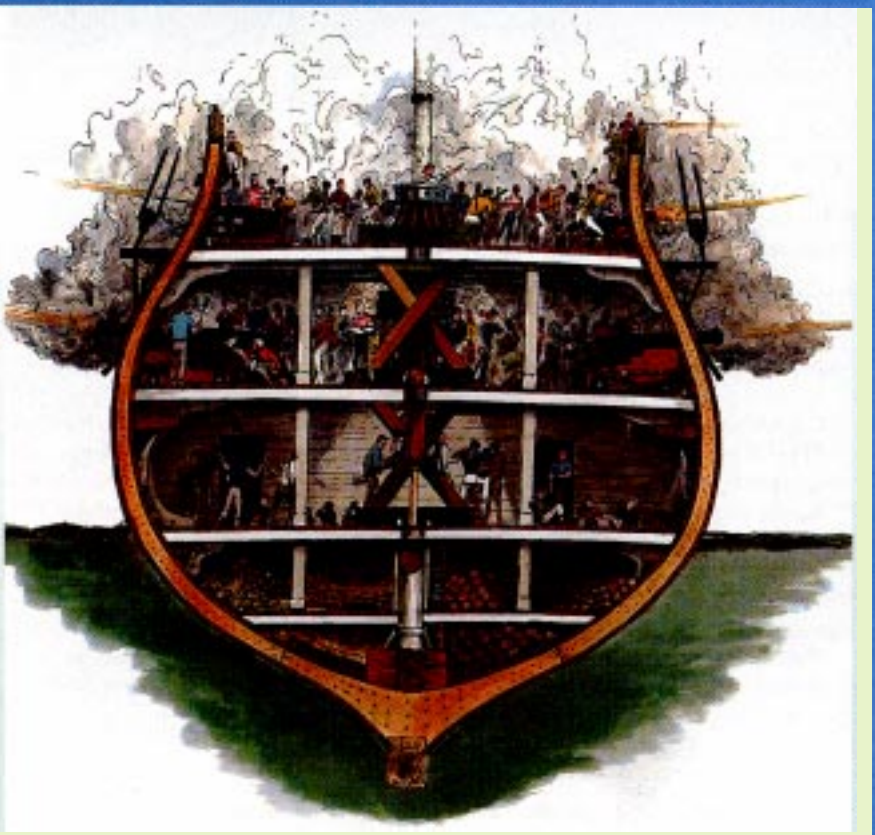
In the AD&D game, mounted weapons fall into four categories: light cannons, medium cannons, heavy cannons, and mortar. Warships mount light cannons on the rails of their top decks. Cannoneers use these weapons as anti-personnel devices, firing light shot at boarders or rigging. Light cannons can also fire 2-lb. shot (see "Artillery," below for more details). Finally, mortar guns fire high-caliber shot to devastating effect-although their range is limited.

Because of their weight, medium and heavy cannons, a well as mortar guns, must sit on a vessel's lower decks. The heavier the cannon, the lower the deck upon which it must be mounted. This weight often slows ships, but it grants them greater firepower.

Gunpowder

Cannons require gunpowder or its magical equivalent. This allows a DM to regulate the use of cannons, as he can modify the price and availability of such substances. As a general rule, gunpowder or magical powder costs 300 gp per pound. A pound of powder is sufficient for 10 light cannon, 6 medium cannon, 4 heavy cannon, and 1 mortar shot.

Generally, artillerists keep supplies of gunpowder (or its equivalent) in containers on their person (one-pound horns) and near their cannons. However, such substances are notoriously inflammable or unstable. Thus, incendiary and heat-based attacks-like flaming torches, Greek fire, and fireball spells—can wreak great damage on ships carrying powder. If gunpowder is exposed to fire, it must make an Item Saving Throw (as oil) against Normal or Magical Fire (depending upon the type of attack). If it fails, the powder explodes in a 15'-radius, causing 3d6 hp damage (and Hull points) per pound of powder. In addition, exploding powder can set off chain reactions if any other containers holding the substance lie within the blast radius. These exposed powders must make Item Saving Throws or else also explode. Ships from highly technological or magical societies may have protection that negates or modifies these Item Saving Throws.



Cannon Weight and Craft Performance

To simulate the effect that cannons have on the performance of ships, first find the weight of each cannon (see Table 4) and multiply it by the number of all cannons on the ship. Then, add this total to the current weight of the ship's cargo to determine the fraction of the ship's cargo capacity currently in use. Finally, modify the craft's performance based on the "Cargo Capacity Modifications" section.

For example, a DM wants to determine how a sloop's 10 medium cannons will affect its performance. The DM refers to Table 4 and discovers that medium cannons weigh 2 tons each, then multiplies the weight of each cannon by the number of cannons and comes up with 20 (10 cannons x 2 tons = 20) tons. The DM then checks Table 2 to find the total cargo capacity of a sloop (40 tons) and discovers that the medium cannons take up half of the sloop's total cargo capacity. Finally, the DM applies a -2 modifier to the ship's final Pursuit and Maneuverability rolls, as per the "Cargo Capacity Modifications" rules above.

Cannon Shot

As mentioned previously, cannon ammunition comes in varying calibers. The lightest iron balls fired by mounted weapons weighed two lbs. Usually,

Table 4: Armament

Type	Crew	THAC0	Range	Caliber	Weight	Cost
Cannon, Small	2	12	-/1/2/-	S, B, C, 2	350 lbs.	1,000 gp
Cannon, Medium	3	14	10/20/30/40	12,16	2 tons	3,000 gp
Cannon, Heavy	4	16	20/30/40/50	24,36	4 tons	6,000 gp
Mortar[2]	6	17	30/40/50/60	50	8 tons	9,000 gp

1. The cost listed here refers to iron weapons. Multiply the cost of these armaments by three for the brass versions.

2. Ships cannot mount more than three mortars on any given ship, as these weapons are bulky and have a tremendous "kickback." Anytime a vessel fires more than one mortar in a given round, it must make a Seaworthiness check.

Crew refers to the amount of personnel necessary to operate the armament.

THAC0 is a function of the armament itself and not the operator. Cannon targets are effectively AC 0. Mortar targets are effectively AC 4.

Range indicates the maximum firing range of each weapon. These ranges are subdivided into minimum, short, medium, and long categories (all numbers are in tens of yards). For example, a Medium Cannon can not hit unless it is at least 100 yards away from its target. At medium range, a weapon suffers a -2 attack roll penalty. This penalty increases to -5 at long range.

Caliber details the types of shot a particular weapon can utilize. Thus, a Medium Cannon can fire 12-lb. and 16-lb. shot, but it can not fire 2-lb. or 50-lb. shot. See the Cannon Shot section for more details.

artillerists loaded light cannons with anti-personnel shot. This type of ammunition came in three forms: (S)hrapnel, sharp fragments of metal that formed a curtain of death when fired; (B)ar shot, small iron balls joined by an elongated metal bar; (C)hain shot, small iron balls connected by flexible chain. These guns inflict damage in a 5' radius.

Heavier iron ball shot proved quite effective in smashing the hulls of opposing vessels. Although loading such ammunition into a cannon and preparing the weapon to fire took valuable combat time, the damage potential of high caliber cannon shot turned the tide of many a naval battle. Refer to Table 5: Ammunition for the exact combat statistics of caliber shots in the AD&D game.

Crew Experience and Rate of Fire

Of Ships and the Sea gives information relating to the overall experience of a vessel's crew. If the DM wishes, he can modify the rate of fire for cannons and mortars according as follows: Landlubbers add 2 rounds to their rate of fire, Scurvy Rats add 1 round to their rate of fire, Mariners subtract one round from their rate of fire, and Old Salts subtract 2 rounds from their rate of fire. Thus, six Old Salts manning a medium cannon fire once every 4 rounds. Thus, they can fire twice in a lo-minute combat round.

Running Cannon Combat

Using the core rules, cannon battles occur just as regular combat. To simplify the "bookkeeping," the DM should use group initiative for each vessel in the battle. If the DM wishes, he can allow PCs to make saving throws vs. breath weapon to reduce cannon damage by half.

If the DM uses the rules found in *Of Ships and the Sea,* cannon combat occurs during the Action phase as an artillery attack. Because cannons and mortars are mounted weapons, a vessel can bring only one half of its armament to bear in any combat. Thus, a 1st-rate galleon can fire 50 of its guns in one round, then-if it wins a subsequent Maneuvering phase-fire the other 50 guns as it brings the other ports to bear and allows the recently fired cannons reload. Such tactics are particularly effective if an enemy vessel has inferior firepower.

Nautical Glossary

DMs and players alike can use this glossary to add depth to game play. While too much jargon can confuse and overcomplicate an encounter, a few well-placed nautical terms can set the mood for an entire evening's adventures.

Abaft: Toward the stern of a ship relative to some other object or position (i.e., "abaft the mizzen mast").

Abeam: On a bearing or direction at right angles to the fore-and-aft line of a ship.

Aboard: In or on board a ship.

About: Across the wind in relation to the bow of a sailing vessel.

Aft: At or toward the stem. (The adjectival form is after, ie *the after gangplank.)*

Aground: Resting on the bottom. If done purposefully, a ship takes the ground, when done accidentally it runs aground.

Ahead: The forward movement of a ship (to sail ahead) or any distance directly in front of a ship on its current heading.

Ahoy: The standard hail by which a ship's crew attracts the attention of a crew on another ship.

Aloft: The area above or overhead of the ship-including anywhere about the upper yards, masts, and rigging of ships.

Amidships: In the middle of a ship. Sometimes shortened to midships when given as a helm order.

Anchorage: An area off a coastline that provides secure holding for anchors.

Apostles: The two large bollards fixed to the main deck of square-rigged ships.

Astern: The backward movement of a ship or the hinder part of a vessel.

Athwart: A direction across the line of a ship's course.

Backstays: Long support ropes running from all mastheads above the lower masts to the sides or stem of a ship.

Ballast: Additional weight carried in a ship to give it more stability.

Bare Poles: The condition of a ship when it trims all of its sails in the face of extreme winds or storms.

Battens: Thin, flat pieces of wood used to stiffen sails.

Batten Down the Hatches: Securing the hatches by means of gratings and tarpaulins that are kept in place by the addition of battens.

Beakhead: The space in a ship of war immediately foreward of the forecastle, used as a lavatory. Also called a head.

Beam: The measurement of a ship at its widest part.

Berth: A place to sleep on a ship or a place to moor a vessel when in a harbor.

Board: The name given to each tack of a ship when it sails against the wind.

Bollard: A large post of wood or metal sunk in the quay to which a vessel's mooring lines are fastened.

Boom: A spar used to extend the foot of a sail in a square rigged vessel or a permanent spar at the foot of the main-sail in a fore-and-aft rigged ship. Also a floating barrier at the mouth of a harbor.

Bow: The foremost end of a ship.

Bowsprit: A spar carrying its own sail that projects over the bows of a vessel.

Brace: Moving the yards of a square-rigged vessel so as to present the optimum amount of sail for the desired maneuver.

Bulkhead: A vertical partition dividing a ship into separate compartments.

Bulwarks: The sides of a ship above the upper deck built to protect mariners from high seas.

Burthen: A term used to describe the measure of a ship's carrying capacity, based on the number of tuns of wine a hold could store.

By the Head: A term that describes a ship that draws more than its normal depth of water foreward, with its bow lying deeper than its stem.

By the Stern: A term that describes a ship that draws more than its normal depth of water aft.

Cabin: A sleeping compartment.

Canvas: A cloth properly woven of hemp. The name derives from the greek word kannabis, which means hemp.

Capstan: A cylindrical barrel fitted on large ships for heavy lifting work, particularly lifting anchors.

Castles: Fighting platforms erected at each end of a warship, forecastles at the fore and aftcastles (or sterncastles) at the aft or stem of a ship.

Cast off: To release a rope so that a ship may sail out to sea.

Coxswain: A name for the helmsman and senior member of a ship's boat.

Crow's Nest: A look-out station on the foremast, originally made from a barrel.

Table 5: Ammunition

Caliber	Damage (DMG)	Damage (OSS)	ROF	Bonus
Shrapnel	1d4	3 / -	1/2(5)	-
Bar	1d4+1	4 / -	1/2(5)	-
Chain	1d4+3	5 / -	1/2(5)	-
2-lb.	1d6+1	6/1d3	1/3(3)	-
12-lb.	1d8+4	- / 1d6	1/4(2)	+1
24-lb.	3d8+4	- / 2d4	1/6(1)	+2
36-lb.	4d8+6	- / 2d6	1/8(1)	+3
50-lb.	5d8 + 10	- / 3d6	1/10(1)	+4

Damage (DMG): The die range indicates the amount of damage a weapon inflicts if the DM uses the naval rules found in the *Dungeon Master Guide,* or if the weapon fires that type of ammunition at creatures (see Table 35: Artillery vs. Creatures in *Of Ships and the Sea).* Note that in the core rules, these weapons inflict damage in a 5'-radius.

Damage (OSS): This value refers to the naval combat rules found in *Of Ships and the Sea.* The number before the slash indicates the missile factors that a weapon adds to any missile attacks. Note that only ammunition fired out of light cannons functions this way. Shot from medium cannons and heavier weapons only strike a vessel itself, as these armaments are mounted on the lower decks, making it impossible for artillerists to aim at enemy crew. The die range after the slash indicates how much damage the shot inflicts if it strikes a ship itself.

ROF: This indicates how often the weapon can fire. The first number indicates the weapon's rate of fire in one-minute rounds. The number in parentheses is the weapon's rate of fire during ten-minute combat rounds (found in *Of Ships and the Sea).*

Bonus: This bonus applies to all rolls on Table 22: Artillery Effects in *Of Ships and the Sea.*

"Cutting his painter": A sailor's expression that refers to the clandestine departure of a ship in harbor, or, in reference to an individual, to depart one's life.

Deck-house: A small cabin or hut on the upper deck of a ship.

Draught: The minimum amount of water necessary to float a ship.

Draw: A sail draws when it is full of wind.

Drive: A word used to describe when wind and sea push a ship leeward.

Fathom: A unit of measurement used to determine water depth. A fathom is roughly 6 feet.

Fetch: To arrive, especially after a hard storm.

Fitting-out: The preparation of a vessel right before it sails out to sea.

Fore-and-aft rig: Rigging that stretches out along the length of a ship.

Foremast: The mast nearest to the bow.

Freeboard: The vertical distance between the waterline and the upper deck of a ship.

Furl: To gather up the sails and secure them to the mast or yard.

Gaff: A spar whose lower end runs up and down the mast of a fore-and-aft rigged vessel.

Galley: A ship's kitchen.

Gangway: the movable passageway by which sailors and passengers embark or disembark.

Gunport: A hole cut into the side of a warship used to fire broadside guns.

Gunwale: The piece of timber that runs along the top of a ship's side.

Gybe: To swing across. Used when the boom of a fore-and-aft rigged vessel swings across as the wind crosses the stem of the ship.

Halyards: The ropes and tackles used to hoist and lower sails.

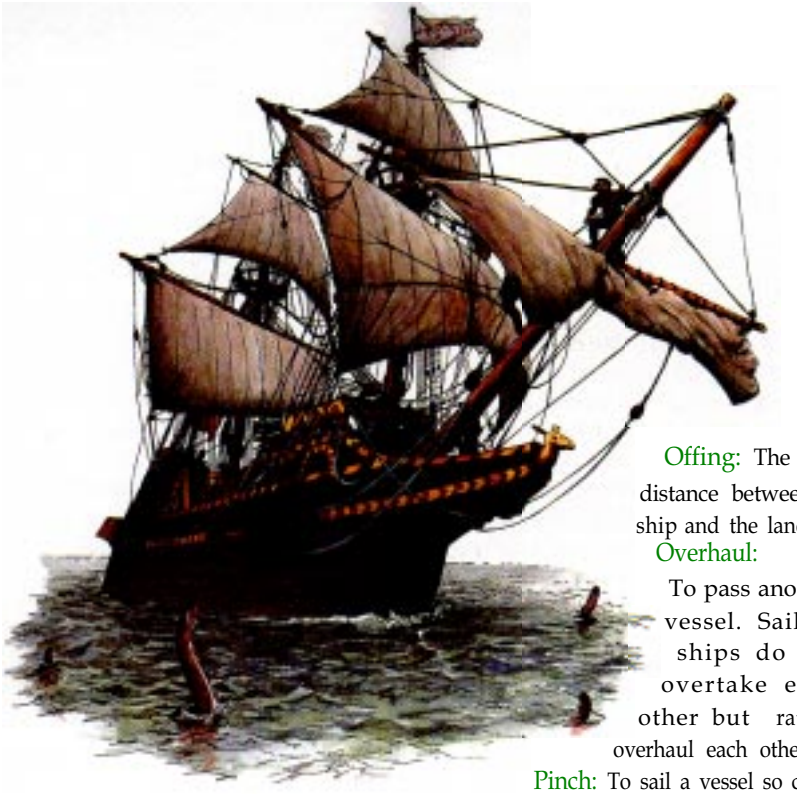
Handsomely: A term meaning gradually and carefully, as in the phrase "Lower the boom handsomely."

Heave-to: To turn a ship into the wind with her sails shortened, so that the vessel makes no headway. Sailors use this tactic to hold their position in the face of very strong winds.

Helm: The handle or tiller that controls the rudder.

Hold: The interior cavity of a ship.

In irons: A term that describes a ship



Offing: The safe distance between a ship and the land.

Overhaul: To pass another vessel. Sailing ships do not overtake each other but rather overhaul each other.

that is temporarily helpless and drifting.

Jib: A triangular sail set before the foremast.

Jury: Any temporary object used to get a disabled ship back to port; for example, a jury rig or a jury mast.

Keel: The lowest continuous timber that runs the length of a ship at its center.

Lateen sail: A triangular sail laced to the long yard. Lateen sailed ships were often used in the Mediterranean Sea.

Lee: The side of a ship away from the wind.

Leeway: The sideways drift off a set course occasioned by the wind.

List: A prolonged leaning of a ship to one side or another.

Mainsail: The principal sail of a vessel. The mainsail of a square-rigged ship is the lowest one on the mainmast.

Mast: A vertical pole that supports the sails.

Mizzen: The aftermost mast of a three-masted ship (or a two-masted ship if the foremost mast is the main mast).

Muster, to: To assemble all crew on deck.

Number One: A Royal Navy colloquialism referring to the First Lieutenant. In common parlance, the First Lieutenant is referred to as Jimmy-the-one.

Pinch: To sail a vessel so close to the wind that she loses speed.

Pipe down: The order usually given by the boatswain (in the form of a whistle from a pipe) to indicate that all hands should turn in for the night.

Pitch: A mixture of coal and tar used to seal gaps between planks.

Pitch: To ride the water so that a wave lifts the bow of a ship and then the stem, so it tilts successively backward and then forward.

Poop: A raised deck aft of a ship.

Port: The left hand side of a ship when looking toward the bow.

Powder-Monkey: A ship's boy who carries gunpowder to the guns.

Quarterdeck: The afterpart of the upper deck before the poop.

Quay: A projection along the boundaries of a harbor provided for ships to lie alongside.

Quoin: A wedge pushed under the breech of a cannon to elevate or depress the muzzle.

Reef: To reduce the area of a sail by rolling up part of it and securing.

Rig: The arrangement of a ship's masts and sails.

Rigging: The system of ropes used to support the masts and handle the sails.

Rudder: The vertical plate beneath the waterline used to steer a ship.

Scupper: To sink a ship deliberately by punching holes in its hull below the waterline. Also known as scuttling.

Spar: A term that refers to any wooden support used in a ship's rigging.

Square-rigged: A term that describes any ship that has its principal sails extended on yards suspended at the middle horizontally from the mast.

Starboard: The right-hand side of a ship when looking at its bow.

Stern: The after end of a vessel.

Tack: Sailor's word for food.

Tack: To change the direction in which a sailing vessel moves to bring the wind to its opposite side. This zig-zag course allows the ship to sail against the wind.

Tiller: A wooden bar that fits into the round head of the rudder.

Transoms: The horizontal timbers fixed across the sternpost of a vessel to give it a flat stem.

Trim, to: To set the sails so as to make best use of the wind.

Windward: The side from which the wind blows (opposite of leeward).

Yard: The spar fastened horizontally or diagonally to the mast from which the sail is set.

Yardarm: The part of a yard that extends past the top comer of a square sail. Sailors were often hung from the yardarms as punishment.

Keith Strohm works in the TSR core AD&D group as a designer and editor, but some days he'd rather be a powder-monkey.

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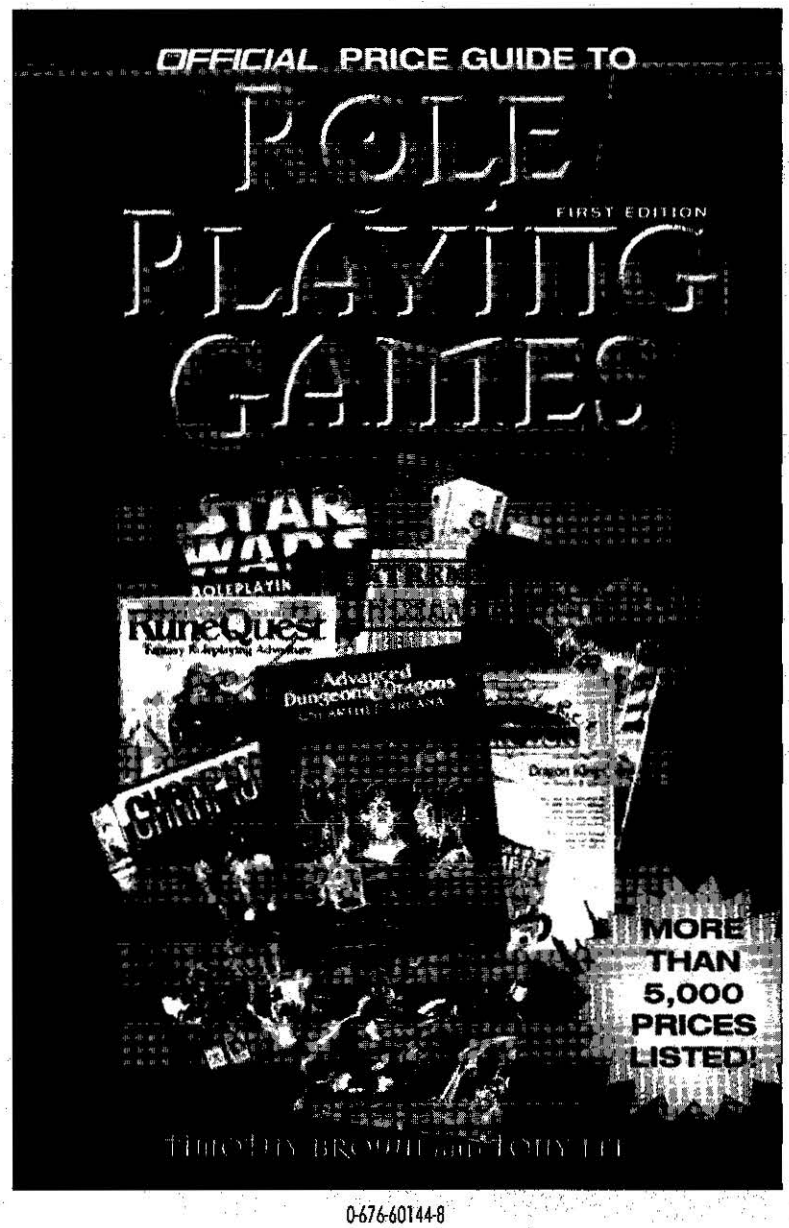

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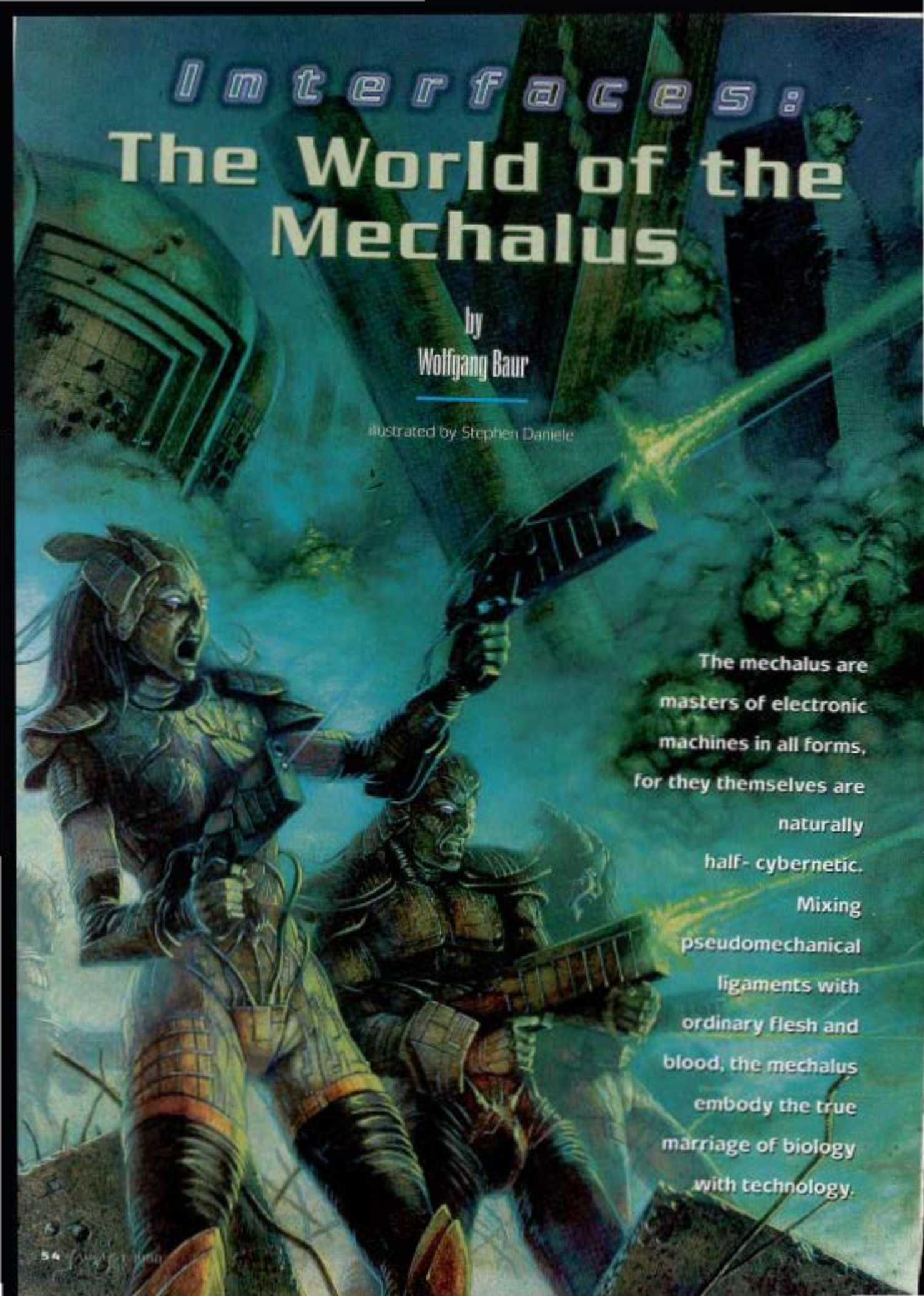


The mechalus are masters of electronic machines in all forms, for they themselves are naturally half- cybernetic. Mixing pseudomechanical ligaments with ordinary flesh and blood, the mechalus embody the true marriage of biology with technology.

Physiology

The mechalus are a technologically advanced people who colonized the entirety of their star system prior to human contact. This humanoid species made a conscious effort to alter their physiology. Genetic engineering and cybernetic implants on the molecular level are now a natural part if mechalus biology. With biomechanical parallels of their nervous systems, the mechalus are doubly shielded against neurotoxins and nerve gasses. Without their mechanical systems, their bodies would succumb to the biowarfare agents still lurking on Aleer's surface. Without their biological side, their machine side would lack both sentience and the ablility to process minerals to metals—eventually collapsing from an inability to repair itself. The mechalus are neither flesh nor machine; they are symbiotes.

Symbiosis

The typical mechalus stands about 1.8 meters tall and weighs about 90 kilos. While at first glance they appear human, closer inspection reveals some major differences. Veins of circuitry are interwoven with flesh and blood, and mechalus hair combines protein strands with cable filaments. Unlike humans who have undergone surgery to install cybernetic enhancements, a mechalus's form is completely natural—each is born with this synthesis of flesh and biomechanics, not altered through surgery. The secret is in the life cycle of their inorganic side: the mechalus nanite cycle.

In fact, all mechalus are symbiotes, depending on both mechanical and biological systems. Their mechanical side has never taken over because the species cannot reproduce without biological help. Mechalus reproduce sexually much as mammals do; the biological components of both parents form the nucleus that grows into another mechalus. But the biomechanical side of the species is passed down strictly though the maternal side. When a female mechalus reaches child-bearing age at about 23, the mother's processor and self-repair nanites fashion copies of themselves for later use, a process that requires almost two years. When the mother becomes pregnant, this mechanical seed joins the fertilized biological embryo and helps it survive to term. Most mechalus couples bear four to five children in their youth, around age thirty, which is considered the optimal time for reproduction.

Mechalus life expectancy is about the same as that of humans, though they normally maintain good health and active lifestyles until death.

Cybernetics

All mechalus are born with a nanocomputer, its data storage area, and an extra data storage area. This nanocomputer is thoroughly integrated with the biological functions. The extra storage provides room for growth and for fault-tolerant data mirroring. All mechalus have built-in reflex devices and a selection of data tendrils (the equivalent of NIJacks) to match various hardware types. These components allow them to use programs stored in their neural slots. The mechalus's biological nervous system is little more than a backup system for its mechanical and electrical relays.

Data tendrils are given to mechalus children as a coming of age present. In the biotechnical world of mechalus anatomy, computer and storage facilities aren't implanted surgically. Instead, they grow and then regrow according to specifications detailed from within their bodies. These specifications change throughout their adult life; they only replace a few external components. The process of regrowing or updating a system is called a flash-upgrade (for software) or a flesh-upgrade (for hardware), and it can be undertaken by a mechalus at any stage of its life. The flash-upgrade is a simple matter of downloading and reformatting the code for a particular biomechanical system. The flesh-upgrade process is much more involved and takes from 1-4 weeks. It requires a special mineral diet and deliberate infection with upgrade nanites, much as human life extension treatment requires viruses to complete gene therapy. The upgrade process prevents adults from becoming outdated or surpassed by younger models; most mechalus undergo a flash-upgrade every year.

Overload

Mechalus are naturally immune to the human condition called cykosis; their very nature is friendly to the integration of machine and biological systems. They can integrate more cyberware into themselves than can other races (1.5 times as much as a human), partly because the implants they receive are tailored to their special metabolisms. But they can still suffer adverse effects from an excess of cyberware. Any mechalus who installs enough cyberlware to suffer cykosis becomes a blood-hungry warrior of the old Credo tradition, losing most higher reason and reverting to violence. Some non-mechalus mistake this condition for cykosis. In most cases, this means that the hero becomes a supporting cast member under the GM's control.

Interfaces

To many humans, the mechalus's most disturbing physical features are their interface adapters, small tentacle-like prehensile wires that the mechalus use to link themselves directly to various digital systems. The wires are compatible with most computer systems, and since the Rigunmor Star Consortium stays on top of technical trends, there are very few systems that a mechalus's hardware can't access. They know the location of

Optional Rule: Direct Interface Bonus

Mechalus interface filaments grant a -1 step bonus not only to Computer Science skills (due to direct interface) but also to all skill checks that require the use of a computer interface. These skills include Vehicle— *space, air, land* (PL 6 and higher vehicles), System Op, and Armor Op (for PL 7 and higher armor).

Ghost Skins

Many Credo warriors have an implanted body temperature regulator, called a ghost skin. This implant reduces the mechalus's skin temperature to match the surrounding ambient temperature. As a result, IR sensing cannot detect them. This cyberware costs 4 skill points and has a cyber tolerance size of 2. The costs for Ordinary, Good, and Amazing versions of the material (which provide a -1, -2, and -3 bonus to Deception— *stealth,* respectively) are $1,500, $3,000, and $4,500.

input/output ports on most machines, their nanocomputers keep internal schematics of most devices, and they can match processor and bus clockspeeds using an internal processor as easily as a human increases or decreases his breathing. They carry communications protocols for all major hardware systems, updating these on a regular basis. For the mechalus, bits of code are no more interesting than vitamins are to humans.

While it's true that computers are very intolerant of spiking and surging power, the mechalus interfaces work within the parameters of the machines they merge with. When plugged in, the mechalus runs device driver daemons in the background; these let it manipulate the system directly. A mechalus linking into a new machine can write appropriate code and communication protocols by making a successful Computer Science— *programming* skill check, much as a human might adapt to the quirks of a new type of car.

The mechalus interface fails only in a few special cases. A secure computer might not have an input device, it might have proprietary input devices, or it might have the input jack locked by a password. As long as the mechalus has the tools to juryrig a solution or find the password, it can still gain access to the system. In all cases, the mechalus is limited by the software running on the computer and can do anything that could eventually be done with a keyboard, mouse, or data tendril.

History

For most of their history, the mechalus were a warrior race engaged in constant battle. They didn't just stumble upon their present pacifism; they earned it during centuries of slaughter and ecocide. After generations of war, the mechalus lost their taste for killing just over 350 years ago. (All of the following dates appear in Galactic Standard format.) Ironically, a species bred for war now campaigns for peace.

Progress Levels 0 and 1: Electric Youth

The mechalus followed an unusual path of technological development. Within the past 20,000 years, they began using stone tools and herding animals. By 8,000 years ago, they had created an agricultural society, and the founding of city-states led to their first great wars. These wars led to the intense development of metallurgy; Aleer, the mechalus home planet is rich in silver, iron, titanium, tungsten, gold, and tin. The mechalus soon learned to forge bronze and iron-and-around 6,000 years ago-to master electricity

Though the mechalus learned to command electricity early in their development, they remained an agricultural society. At first, they used metal/acid batteries for simple tasks such as anodizing jewelry, rustproofing iron, and even generating light. Soon, however, they began building simple static charge weapons, able to kill with a single massive shock. As their mastery of electricity grew, their weapons improved. By 5,000 years ago, the mechalus had learned how to generate electricity from both static charges and batteries; their metalworkers even learned how to capture lightning for later use. Their use of electricity remained sophisticated throughout their later development.

Progress Level 2: The Long Wars

Throughout the fourth millennium BC, the mechalus formed four great empires-bodies that, unlike human nations, remained stable for thousands of years. Pesh, Leenest, Megarin, and Oldurreg each controlled one of the planet's six great continents. The remaining two continents were contested by smaller nations and provided a place for the larger nations to fight proxy wars.

Pesh was the earliest empire to form, founded by priests of the Mechalus's sky-god Ositan. Considered inventive but dishonorable by the other nations, Pesh remained a capital of learning, scholarship, and industry. Ositan's priesthood had been the first to discover electricity, and their knowledge quickly spread to other nations.

Leenest was next, a confederation of city-states from the river-valleys. In time, it grew to dominate the surrounding mountains and their hydroelectric power, but its strength remained firmly grounded in its large population and fertile agriculture.

Megarin traded by sea with Pesh but also contested Pesh's control of the vital trade routes between the mines of Ota and Megarin's armories. Its people were sailors and explorers, always finding new sources of ore for their smelters.

Finally there came Oldurreg, a splinter state founded by refugees from Megarrin. Living high on the central Ota plateau and along the coast of the Otean sea, the Oldurreg are famed as miners and as the most stubborn of the mechalus, as immobile in their opinions as their mountains. Oldurreg are considered slow but stable among the mechalus.

By the end of the millennium, those four nations had colonized the entire planet and controlled 90% of Aleer's land mass. The remainder was split among various client states, the polar cap, and neutral states conducting precarious balancing acts among the greater powers. The nations fought occasional naval wars and diplomatic struggles, but they also devoted great effort to agriculture and science. Electricity-generating waterwheels and windmills were in place by the middle of the period.

From the third millennium to first millennium BC, the mechalus entered an era of retreat from progress. Religious struggles and questions of proper government preoccupied them in a brief period like the human Renaissance from -182 to -230, but it didn't last. But by the end of the period, in -230, Oldurreg, beset by internal discontent, unified its warring princes by declaring war on Megarin, launching a war of conquest that soon engulfed all other nations.

The intractable stubbornness of the Oldurreg kept the war going well beyond any reasonable duration. The war dragged on for the next 400 years, with ever-increasing stakes: losers were enslaved, massacres became policy, and total war against civilian targets was common as early as 150. This constant struggle had its price: mechalus institutions were changing to meet the challenges of institutionalized warfare.

Progress Level 3: Decline of Tyants

During the years from 295 to 1,100 AD, the mechalus institutions governing the great nations slowly reduced the role of the Jowh ("tyrant"). Nations were ruled more often as a diffuse collection of like-minded citizens; civil councils replaced monarchies. The mechalus simply refused to give their lives for the pride or

ambition of any one ruler, but they fought savagely for any cause their whole society took to heart. By 826 AD, Megarin armies were drafted by national custom, rather than from the retinues of the tyrants and their lords.

Pesh followed Megarm into changing its imperial heritage; it deposed its entire ruling class in a decade of bloody civil unrest. Oldurreg remained the only holdout, retaining its feudal system while tightening control through the use of labor camps and reprisals against anyone questioning the Tyrant of Oldurreg. More and more, however, the true power in Oldurreg lay in the hands of the bureaucrats and secret police chiefs, rather than any individual.

Progress Level 4: Motorization

In the 1100s, the invention of the air-powered chuff rifle and chuff cannon (see "Technology") changed the fundamental rules of warfare, leading to the use of trenches, siege engines, and other emplacements, as well as the decline of the Nidrazh ("marauder") cavalry elite units. Aleerin cavalry is a thing of the past. During the Cheanet Campaign between Pesh and Megarin cavalry units were an important factor in warfare; elite Nidrazh rode hipolat-beasts, four-legged herd animals that weighed more than 1,200 kilos and required years of training before they could be deployed in battle. The hipolat's thick, rhino-like skin provided good protection against arrows and slashing weapons, and its heavily reinforced skull allowed it to break through enemy ranks, barricades, and even light fortifications. However, the high-strung and over-bred hipolat were poor subjects for adaptation to the age of biological warfare that followed; the last of the breed died in 1576, after the Bleeding Air Offensive.

By the 1200s, the Pesh had developed an electrical motor to power war machines. Pesh was the first nation to deploy flying machines, a breakthrough that allowed it to hold onto an image of greatness in the 1300s. On the inside, though, resource exhaustion and internal rebellions brought Pesh to the brink of surrender.

By the 1400s, mechalus warriors were augmenting themselves with integral armor and night-vision sights. The first biological ammunition for chuff rifles was deployed in 1498; countermeasures included improved armor and immune-boosting chemicals. Fortunately, Aleer is very poor in fissionable materials such as uranium, so the mechalus never developed nuclear weapons. Their conventional wars dragged on, and many battle zones soon became vast chemical and biological wastelands.

Progress Level 5: The Plague Years

The centuries of war took their toll. Mechalus numbers dwindled as biological and chemical weapons spread unchecked, destroying the nation of Pesh in the first of the Great Plagues, in 1573. The First Plague was quickly followed by the Bleeding Air Offensive, the Blinding Plague, and the Plague of Slow Rot. In 1588, the Megarin nation issued filter masks to all citizens and implanted corneal shields to counter the Blinding Plague. Vaccines, improved filter masks, and other countermeasures were soon deployed in every nation, but the bioweapons of this period still make occasional appearances on Aleer today Outbreaks of the Scarlet Plague and the Blinding Plague are especially prevalent in the former Pesh and Megarin territories, respectively These fresh occurrences of plague are thought to be the result of windborne spores or perhaps the release of trapped gas from ancient underground weapons sites.

In 1649, the nation of Oldurreg collapsed, overrun in a chemical bloodbath that has left much of the continent of Ota barren to this day. With the collapse of Oldurreg's bread baskets, the other nations faced a wave of hunger and even starvation.

Leenest and Megarm continued their struggle at a greatly reduced pace for almost another 150 years after the first plague wars. Eventually, in 1757, the Megarin found a way to implant a self-sustaining suite of cybergear that protected the young and curbed the nation's shocking infant mortality rate. Border wars, sabotage, guerrilla wars, and terrorist attacks against reservoirs and food supplies became more common than wars of conquest. Over time, Megarin's supremacy in both biological weapons

Fallout

The annihilation of the Oridin gave the aleerins pause. For almost 200 years, they had clawed their way onto a distant planet and destroyed its native population. Suddenly, their culture was rudderless. Their victory produced a radical change in aleerin culture. They put aside their warlike ways and began debating their Warrior's Credo, the self-defense implants, and all the armaments of war.

The debate split the mechalus into two camps: the radical Kiscae ("Negationists") and the more practical Pegont ("Those who Remember"). The uncompromising Kiscae were the radical pacifists, those who swore that their own biological components were incompatible with peaceful existence. Shedding the last remnants of organic life, the Kiscae sought to become one with their computers. After stripping aleerin military vessels of their weaponry, in 2195 they left in the Aleerin stellar fleet, a slower-than-light set of lightships heading out toward the galactic rim on a 1,000-year voyage.

Those who remained on Aleer still felt the impact of the Kiscae's departure for decades, as the fleet slowly sailed out of communication range. In 2214, Aleer lost contact with the fleet, but despite persistent follow-up, no one has ever been able to establish whether the Kiscae fleet was destroyed or simply stopped answering. The mechalus have never discussed the destination of the Kiscae fleet with human visitors; the fleet has never been found by human survey ships. It might have been destroyed or it might have settled a nearby planet. Few humans even know of the story, and the mechalus have refused to comment.

However, the Pegont spent little time grieving for their wandering half. They believed the fault of the genocide lay in a system that allowed charismatic leaders to make decisions for the people, and in the Warrior's Credo software developed during the Wars of Unity, which demanded blood for blood. The pegont didn't want to give up their biological side; on the contrary, they believed that the mechalus integration of biological and machine elements was entirely compatible with peace, that each side balanced the other. They worked for change, slowly driving the old Warrior's Credo out of the mainstream, though they retained the underlying hardware. In the final touch to heal the wounds of war, mechalus settlers established a permanent colony on Oridin in 2161.

and in biomechanical defenses gave its citizens a numerical and technological edge. In 1888, the Megarin began the final offensive in what they called the War of Unity. Leenest's capital, Bogdarin, fell to General Thetor's First Army 12 years later, and the planet has been unified ever since.

Progress Level 6: Interplanetary War

Around 1901, Thetor's renamed Unified Aleer Army (UAA) expanded its reach across all of the Agemac planets in system ships powered by solar sails and with solar laser engines. After almost 70 years of exploration by robot surveyors, the aleerins finally sent astronauts to visit nearby planets, starting with the planet Orod, which was known to harbor the right conditions to sustain carbon-based life. Filled with expansionist fervor, the aleerins made contact with the oridin, a second sentient species within their own star system, in 1966.

The oridin were not nearly as technically advanced as the aleerin, but they had built cities and formed several primarily theocratic cultures. Physically, the oridin resembled the aleerins themselves, but without any biomechanical enhancements. Their genetic and physical similarity has never been properly explained, though some aleerin legends hint at contact with starfaring races in the distant past. Perhaps the oridin were carried to their planet by a Precursor race, or perhaps they were the result of a secret colony founded by a nation desperate to survive the Wars of Unity. The truth will probably never be known, since the oridin didn't survive.

The two species hated each other from the moment of first contact; oridin zealots overran the aleerin ship and slaughtered all hands. A strange slow-motion war followed for the first decade thereafter, as the aleerin ships bombarded Orod with biological weapons. Thetor was unwilling to attempt a conquest on the ground so far from home; indeed, there was much to do on Aleer, unifying the planet and rebuilding its ravaged cities and factories. Until his body's death in 2020, the UAA maintained a quarantine of the planet while the rest of the system was settled.

The second aleerin landings, in 2039, were a massive effort; remembering the risks of starting a war they couldn't finish, the aleerins had spent years building an armada to carry more than 100,000 UAA troopers to Orod. The landing parties met no resistance; the biological weapons had done their work. The dead lay everywhere.

The aleerin armies found city after city deserted. The few scattered survivors in the hills and in Orid's fernlike forests were rarely more than shadows in the forests, and even they were dying out. The plague-ravaged oridin were incapable of launching more than sporadic attacks against the aleerin occupation of their world. By 2145, the oridin genocide was complete. The last known oridin died in the Nestor Hills that year. Scattered reports of remnant populations of oridin continue to this day, but no physical evidence has ever materialized.

In many ways, the aleerin culture never recovered from the genocide.

Progress Level 7: Contact

In 2281, humans from the Rigunmor Star Consortium entered the Colee system. Rigunmor diplomats were astounded by the thousands of lightsail system ships traveling throughout the system, and by the computer and electronic marvels they saw when they made contact with the *Pirsk,* the vessel where the Rigunmors and the aleerins met to negotiate the terms of their shared future. The Rigunmors spared no expense to demonstrate the advantages of an alliance, offering exclusive trading rights, access to Rigunmor stardrive technology, and even the colonization rights to several nearby systems.

In retrospect, it's clear that the Rigunmors, normally hardheaded traders, could have driven a much harder bar-

gain, but the awesome sight of such an advanced alien species seems to have overwhelmed the Rigunrnor negotiators. To the amazement of the Rigunmor delegation, prepared for months of arbitration, the aleerins signed a commercial agreement after only a few days.

Though the aleerins hid it well, they were still recovering from a century of incredible internal turmoil and were quite vulnerable at the time. They had no war fleet. The Rigunmor proposal to incorporate Aleer within the Rigunmor sphere of influence met no resistance. The aleerins even accepted the name that humans gave them: mechalus. Shedding their old name seemed another way to forget the past.

2501: Current Prospects

The mechalus' unique abilities and technology have contributed to the Star Consortium's growth as an interstellar power, and in return the Consortium has rewarded them with planets of their own, rich contracts, and preferred seats on several commodities exchanges.

Rumors abound that the mechalus are the force behind the Consortium's ability to fend off determined Grid attacks by VOIDCORP™ and even Insight during the Second Galactic War. Even the most pacifist mechalus, it turned out, didn't consider Grid warfare a form of violence. As long as the mechalus contain the specters of their violent past and remain at the heart of the Rigunmor technical elite, they will thrive.

Culture & Society

More than any human culture save the Nariac, mechalus culture relies heavily on machinery and computers. The mechalus make extensive use of robots in limited applications (primarily manufacturing and exploration), and they are adept at building them. However, they consider consider the employment of robots in any task dishonorable-or at the very least, incredibly rude-because robots can be "irresponsible," and poor programming can result in disaster. The very thought that robots can perform the work of an aleerin is insulting, because it implies that the biological sides of the workers are unimportant. Aleerins are loathe to give offense in this way, and so only use robots in jobs that no one yet holds: being sent out as explorers, or surveillance machines, or in new factories.

Among modern aleerins, the Pesh are suspect for a number of reasons, primarily because of their religion and their way of waging war. First of all, the Pesh believe that the fully mechanical mechalus aboard the Kiscae Fleet (see "Fallout") are blessed; their transformation was something holy, and those left behind can only console themselves with the thought that at least some mechalus achieved this state.

Worse, the Pesh use robots in war, a tactic that mechalus view the way most 20th-century humans view putting weapons in the hands of children. It can be done, but it isn't right. Robots are not capable of winning through guile, or superior will, or the sheer rightness of their cause. The Pesh—hard pressed in the great wars-simply don't care.

While mechalus have accepted the human name for them since first contact, they have their own names as well. Among themselves, they refer to about 50 primary sometimes overlapping groups, such as the Peshtar, Megarin, the United, Creedans, and sometimes Witnesses. They seem content with humanity's name for them and rarely provide additional information; they see "mechalus" as a trading name used by others, just as humans call citizens of other nations by names they prefer.

The mechalus believe in Occam's razor as applied to personal relationships; that is, the simplest solution is always preferred. They are loyal to a few close friends and efficiently ignore everyone else. Humans find this attitude a little off-putting, since the mechalus place no value on chit-chat or small talk.

This efficiency extends to family life. The mechalus never marry and don't raise children, though they do take mates for the year or more required to bring a child to term. Once the child is born, its parents give it over to the community, which raises all children communally in a group parenting process. Special emphasis is placed on computer and Grid technology, with young mechalus training their skills against elders in the *aleer eshtal.* The aleer eshtal is a not a real place but a site on the mechalus Grid set aside for virtual combats. There, young mechalus train and receive instruction from older mechalus, fight prize bouts, and eventually undergo the initiation rights that grant them full standing as an adult. Though it is rarely discussed with outsider, this initiation seems to revolve around a test of worthiness through combat against an elder, then a recitation of the rights and responsibilities that adults enjoy Off-world mechalus have established similar Grid arenas in other star systems with a large mechalus population.

When it comes to matchmaking, the mechalus are anything but romantic. They choose mates because it is the logical thing to do. To the mechalus, reproduction is an ordinary consequence of their biological side, just as war is grim

Pidgin Aleerin

The following list of mechahlus terms and phrases is meant merely as an introduction to the subject. The interested student should consult the nearest Rigunmor Grid for a more through treatment of the topic.

Ammunition	Potal
Atmosphere	Li'ie
Battery	Kiel
Change	Kileer
Chuff Rifle	Charega
Driveship	Merefalta
Drivespace	Meree
Electronic	Eshta
Interface	Nist
Lightship	Pinfalta
Nanite	-chi
Negationist	Kiscae
Pacifism	Fentrit
Pistol	Char
Planet	Ylor
Programmer	Kindota
Rigunmor	Rigum
Robot	Iolite
Ruler (obsolete)	Jowh
ship	Nileer
Stadium, or Grid	Aleer eshtal
Stranger	Orod
Star	Seno
Starfall	Te'mere
systemship	Falta
Those who Remember	Pegon
Pacifism	Marvega
Vacuum	Na
victory	Thetor
Wanderer	Geshlor
Where is the ...?	Petopo...?

and dirty work for the unclean, and exploration of the galaxy is necessary but hazardous work.

The mechalus consider themselves superior to "unshaped" species like the weren or sesheyans; they respect the Nariac and the Thuldans because they at least aspire to be more than what crude nature made them. They consider members of other stellar nations foolish for forgoing the obvious benefits of biological engineering.

At the same time that most mechalus are unromantic, devoted members of their communities, they see a certain appeal in breaking free. The Credo warriors and the independent contractors who leave Rigunmor space have a certain cachet, because they turn their backs. The mechalus might not approve publically, but they are privately titillated by anyone who breaks free of their roles and attempts to forge his or her own path.

Government & Politics

Mechalus government is based on consensus politics and group action; individual efforts are rewarded, but rebelling against a decision that has already been made is almost unknown. At its heart, mechalus government consists of a distributed system of efficiency-monitoring expert systems and feedback-linked law enforcement. Literally dozens of parties are part of the Aleerin system, though only four command more than 10% of the electorate. For example, the Traditionalists (23%) believe that things should stay pretty much the way they are, while the Biometricians (18%) believe that perfection of economic models and profit analysis in the Rigunmor style will ultimately lead to mechalus success throughout the galaxy Small groups of militant Creedans (about 2%) agitate for more aggressive policies. Other than that, there are no elaborate elections, no scandals, and few hot-tempered debates. To anyone but a political analyst and economist, mechalus government is dull.

Instead of depending on a heirarchy of rulers, the mechalus technocracy relies on local experts to make local group decisions for most matters. The leader in any given field is agreed upon by his followers, and that leader is given temporary authority to solve a particular problem. A rotating set of advisors and judges (which the mechalus translate into Standard as "magistrates") provides guidance to larger groups, leading construction and production teams or rendering and executing verdicts in criminal cases. Planetary and system-wide decisions are made by brief Grid debate and referendum. Since the mechalus usually agree quickly, these decisions are prompt. Politician is a part-time occupation for a mechalus, and it is considered a somewhat shameful profession at that.

This is not to say that there aren't mechalus capable of command or who wield considerable authority. Many do, even while holding down a secondary job such as janitor, writer, or gardener. In most cases, they deny that they hold such authority, at least in public. Mechalus who live among humans are more likely to admit to such ambitions. Even so, false modesty and false humility run deep in the mechalus spirit.

Finally, there's the matter of crime and punishment. The mechalus legal system depends on retribution, much like many human systems, but it does not imprison the criminal. A petty criminal (and crime rates are low among the mechalus) is usually forced to make restitution to his victim, paying a blood price for injuries and damages. This custom is similar enough to the Rigunmor criminal justice system that it attracts little notice in the Star Consortium. The same can't be said for the pacifism implants, which the mechalus reserve for cases of treason, murder, rape, piracy, kidnapping, battery, extortion, and psionic assault.

In the case of severe crimes, the felon is fitted with a simple restraining device that disallows all sudden motion. This implant, called a "warden," primarily affects movement and striking, but effectively cuts STR and DEX in half. While the implant remains attached to the criminal's central nervous system, he is drugged, passive, and content, unable to commit crimes and sometimes even unable to care for himself. The implanted criminal usually becomes a beggar, a ward of the state, or an indentured servant, depending on the degree of incapacitation and the ruling of the magistrate for the case. The warden destroys itself after a duration chosen by the magistrate at the time of sentencing. A few criminals have attempted to remove a warden, generally without success; a surgeon with the Medical Science-surgery skill and the cybernetic surgery skill rank benefit must make a complex skill check of at least 6 successes and often more. Failure results in brain death for the implant's carrier.

The Cult of Thetor

The mechalus are not a deeply religious people, though they find the Insight religion attractive. They are offended by the anti-technological notions of the Hatire and many Old Earth splinter groups, but for the most part they find human notions of religion irrelevant to their lives and their culture. Since deities are not an active part of the universe they perceive, why waste any time on them?

The most important belief system of the mechalus has been driven underground for hundreds of years: the Credo of War. The Credo was a statement of belief about the honor of war and the glory of combat; it was widely rejected by the mechalus after their defeat of the oridin and their adoption of pacifistic principles, but it has held on in isolated groups, generally those on the fringes of mechalus society.

It wasn't always so. Their strongest leader, Thetor, is now widely regarded by mechalus historians as an aberration of their nationalist youth. Thetor was a programmer, visionary, and general who first programmed and promoted the Credo during the Wars of Unity on behalf of his home nation, the Megarin BioMetric Republic.

In the end, Thetor's warlike implants led the mechalus to genocide, and the backlash has reinforced their aversion to strong leaders of any kind. Anyone seeking personal power is considered immoral at best and criminal at worst. Mechalus are masters at passive resistance to "dangerous demagogues," a category that includes most human heads of state, corporate executives, and religious leaders of all stripes. Thetor's physical body is known to have died in 2020, but his followers claim his spirit was recorded and implanted in the Aleeran Grid. Occasional sightings of a Grid shadow tattooed with an hourglass, the symbol of the cult, give new life to the legend every few years. Whether Thelor's consciousness survives is largely a matter of faith for Creedans.

The story has some basis in reality, because the Creedans have always been the keepers of the machinery that transformed a mechalus into a fully mechanical being, or *iolite.* These machines operated by the careful use of magnetic imaging of each individual cell, then nanite construction of a mechanical copy. The nanites copy each cell, destroying it in the process, called iolification. The last of these devices known were taken away by the Negationists aboard the Kiscae Fleet, but sometimes a gridpilot claims to have found schematics of the device among the datacores of Pesh or some older source, inevitably involving files that require a dozen data format transfers to decode. Such claims are never verified, and surely any such device would be rejected by the mechalus themselves.

These few believers of the Creed who remain active today are known variously as the Thetites (as they call themselves) or Creedans (as others call them); they are convinced that mechalus appeasement of humans has been nothing but a disaster. They believe that abandoning their traditional ways after the orodin genocide was a terrible mistake, and they preach a doctrine of re-armament and rebellion, seeking to establish a sovereign mechalus state. To them, the fight for independence is sacred duty, and any blood shed is a sacrifice to the cause.

To humans, the Warmongers resemble a cross between a terrorist group and a religious cult; in fact, they are neither. The Credo is a technological implant, a particular view of the world dictated by certain hardware and software. While it was useful during the Wars of Unification, most modern mechalus consider the Credo implants outdated relics of a past they would rather forget. However, rogue, overcybered mechalus can revert to fearsome berserkers; this Credo reaction is also sometimes triggered when a mechalus accidentally kills an intelligent being. The fact that the credo spontaneously resurfaces from their mechanical lineage at times is deeply disturbing to most mechalus. While it is unusual to profess Creedan beliefs, it is illegal to actually harbor the Credo implants. Any mechalus caught with this software is exiled from Rigunmor space.

Spacecraft & Weapons

The mechalus are regarded as the finest designers of medical and biological software in the STAR*DRIVE™ universe. Mechalus in-system explorers, transports, and battle craft are state of the art, and their computers rival the best produced by VoidCorp and Insight.

Mechalus in the AD&D® Game

The mechalus are a poor addition to many campaigns because of their heavy reliance on advanced technology However, they do fit in as visitors to the PLANESCAPE® setting, especially in tech-heavy regions such as the lawful plane of Mechanus and the modrons. PCs tight consider the mechalus simply a new type of modron, or an experimental fusion of modron and human forms.

In other campaigns, the mechalus are best used as a individuals, perhaps creations of a strange god, perhaps summoned by a spell gone awry. The mechalus make good creations for the research of a mechanically-inclined wizard like Halaster of Undermountain in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. They can also provide additional far-future characters in the *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* or *Tale of the Comet* adventures.

The mechalus are recognized as the unquestioned masters of computer and Grid technology; they are the front line defenders of Rigunmor Grid sectors against hostile tampering. In fact, their skill at manipulating the Grid is so advanced, only the best of Insight and VoidCorp can match them. For the Rigunmors and those lucky enough to secure mechalus labor from the Consortium, mechalus technology provides a powerful source of efficiency and protection. But the mechalus are also masters in other technologies. Two items found nowhere else are the mechalus lightship and the chuff rifle.

Lightships

The mechalus were a spacefaring culture long before humans arrived. The mechalus explored and settled their entire star system well before humans arrived. Their vehicles were lightships, spacecraft powered by solar wind and lightsails. Lightsails are aluminum and plastic foils that permit a lightship to capture the solar photon flux for propulsion. While photons have no rest mass, they do have mass while in motion, and thus momentum. When the light collides with the reflective sail material, the photon pushes the sail forward when it is reflected. The total force on the lightship

Lightship Travel Timetable

Destination	Duration (days)	With Solar Laser (days)	Typical Payload (kg)
Geshlor	530	84	8,300
Orod	290	33	10,800
Gontis	500	107	5,000
Blagieur	900	159	1,500

is proportional to the sail's area, and the ship can be steered by tilting the sail with respect to the solar wind.

To follow an inward spiral, the lightship slows down and starts to fall toward Agemac, assuming a tighter, faster, elliptical orbit around the star. For an outward spiral, the photon pressure accelerates the sail, moving it away in a larger, slower, orbit around the star.

The lightships can make the trip from Aleer to Orod in roughly 300 days, less when powered by solar lasers fired to accelerate them from the ground. Although they are much slower than other system craft, lightships carry reasonably-sized payloads much more cheaply than gravitic induction system ships. A mechalus system trader isn't burdened by a stardrive's cost and size—and because it's flight is remotely piloted, it requires no onboard crew. The lightships are so efficient that their use has even spread beyond the Agemac system, and now traders throughout the Rigunmor Star Consortium hire them for transhipping any nonperishable cargo. By hitching rides on fortress ships or other large ferry ships, the mechalus lightships have spread throughout the Star Consortium. However, by treaty they are forbidden from being piloted outside RSC borders, manufactured for export, or sold to anyone but Rigunmor citizens. Since all lightships require a direct pilot neural interface, the odds of one being pirated or stolen are slim.

Paratoxin Result Table

CON feat	Effect
Amazing	No additional damage
Good	d6s
ordinary	2d4s
Failure	3d4s
Crit Failure	d4m

LightSails

Mechalus lightsails are made from simple materials like aluminum and plastic, using extremely sophisticated manufacturing processes. Aluminum is cheap, does not oxidize readily, and provides reflectances of 85-88%. All lightsails are spun by special factories in Aleeran high orbit. The sails are typically about a micron thick and constructed from a thin film of aluminium backed by a plastic lining. The lining makes the sail strong enough to survive folding and packing for launch, landing, and redeployment, and it prevents wrinkling. The problems of meteorite punctures and electrostatic charging have been solved by the application of grounding seams, repair nanites, and self-sealing material.

The solar sail vehicle must be rigged with four main design criterion in mind, performance, rigidity, stabilization and control. The mechalus use heliogyro sails, which operate using the same principle as helicopter blades. The twelve blades of the heliogyro stay rigid and in the same plane due to rapid rotation. The heliogyro also solves the problem presented by launching by rolling the sail blades up. When the sails must be deployed after orbital insertion, the spacecraft simply spins to unfurl the sails. Though speed and individual payload capabilities of lightsail ships vary by as much as a factor of five, the values given below are fairly typical. They represent a middle of the line ship, a twelve-blade heliogyro operating both with and without ground-based laser acceleration.

Chuff Weapons

The chuff rifle is the standard small arm of the mechalus. It operates on the same principle as the air rifle, but the chuff rifle is as far advanced beyond the human air gun as the Vulcan cannon is beyond the Gatling gun.

While the chuff rifle has an effective range comparable to a rifled small arm; the weapon itself is lighter. Chuff rifles are made especially to interface with mechalus feedback mechanisms; they feel awkward in human hands, and all nonmechalus suffer a +2 step penalty when using them without a cyberlink.

A chuff rifle is an extremely stealthy weapon: it emits no smoke, flash, or burn residue, and it makes very little noise when fired (less than a silenced slug-thrower--the "chuff" of the name). Furthermore, chuff rifles don't emit enough heat to be tracked by IR sensors; they are "cold" weapons.

The chuff rifle's standard round is paralytic, using tailored toxins to target the nervous system and lock the voluntary muscles. If the target's armor fails to entirely stop the primary damage of the attack, he's been exposed to the toxin and must attempt a Constitution feat to resist its effects: Use the table below to determine the toxin's effects; all damage on this table ignores armor effects. In the days before the death of Thetor and the rise of mechalus pacifism, chuff rifle rounds were far more toxic, killing their target by stopping the victim's heart or

Chuff Weapons Table

Weapon	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage	Cost
Chuff Pistol	-	F	9/18/30	HI/O	d4s/d4+1s/1d4+2s	1,400
Chuff Rifle	-1	F/B/A	30/90/210	HI/O	d4+1s/d4+2s/1d4+2w	1,900
Acid Rounds	-	-	-	HI/O	1d42s/1d6-1s/1d6-1w	10 each
Acid Rounds*	-	-	-	HI/O	1d4+2w/1d6+1w/1d6+1m	10 each
Chuff Launcher	-	F/B/A	20/40/150	HI/O	1d6s/1d6+1w/1dB+1w	5,000
EMP Rounds	-	-	-	HI/G	2d4s/2d4+4s/2d8+2s	300 each
WP Rounds	-	-	-	En/G	1d4+2s/1d6w/1d8m	200 each

*Acid rounds cause more damage to cyberware, mechalus, and robots. Use the second damage line for these targets.

destroying his neurotransmitters. Even the modern paralytic toxin can sometimes have a deadly' effect, as represented by the Critical Failure result on the Paratoxin Results Table.

A chuff pistol has a decent chance to pierce a flak jacket or CF coat, and a rifle can pierce assault gear or a battle jacket. To get through something heavier requires a chuff launcher-unless you first weaken the armor with acid rounds.

Chuff rifles are made in both single-shot and fully automatic versions; pistols are single-shot only Pistols can fire only standard rounds; the WP and EMP ammunition are made only for the older, large caliber chuff launchers.

While chuff rifles typically fire paralytic rounds, they can fire another type of ammunition as well, the "acid round." This ammunition really isn't acid at all, but it contains nanites that attack and break down all organic compounds and armoring compounds for a limited duration. Each shot permanently reduces the target's armor by 1/d4-1/d4+1 points, depending on whether the shooter achieved an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success. The target's armor degrades at one point per round until the full effects are felt. For example, someone in a d4+1 armor vs. LI who is hit by an acid round that inflicts 2 points of damage to his armor winds up with armor equal to d4-1 after two rounds pass. A rifle caliber acid round can destroy body armor entirely, given enough hits. At that point, a victim is vulnerable to paralytic rounds. However, it's just not effective to use acid rounds on an armored vehicle; it takes too many shots and too much time to destroy heavy plating. It takes hours to destroy armor plate, even after it is hit by hundreds of acid rounds. Treat objects of Good or Amazing toughness, like cars and buildings, as immune to these rounds. On the other hand, a hit on a typical small arm renders it useless in short order (2d8 rounds).

Modern chuff weapons are designed to incapacitate, not kill. Older models from the 21st and 22nd century turn up occasionally, and these are much deadlier, built to a larger caliber that can fire larger toxic flechettes, white phosphorous rounds, and even electromagnetic pulse (EMP) rounds. The white phosphorous rounds are especially deadly, as they shatter on impact and burn in an oxygen atmosphere.

The earlier chuff rifles often loaded focused electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) round, burning out electrical components. These rounds do damage only to targets with electrical components: cyberware, robots, body tanks, and machinery such as e-suits or computers. The mechalus themselves are somewhat shielded from such pulses by their redundant biological and mechanical systems and take only half damage from these weapons. Many human machines are less secure.

The Agemar System Homeworlds

	Aleer	(Nileer)	Orod
Primary	Agemar	Aleer	Agemar
Planetary Class	Class 1	Class 4	Class 1
Gravity	G2 (0.98g)	G2 (1.05g)	G2 (1.1g)
Radiation	R1(8 rem/yr)	R2 (4 rem/month)	R1 (2 rem/yr)
Atmosphere	A2 (N,O,CO_2,Cl)	A0 (trace)	A2 (N,O,CO_2,Ne)
Pressure	P3 (0.91)	P0 (trace)	P3 (0.96)
Heat	H2 (19.1° C)	H2 (-27.9° C)	H2 (8.4° C)
Orbital Distance	0.71 AU	0.71 AU	0.86 AU
Diameter	5,910 km	2,132 km	7,571 km
Year (Earth days)	218.5 days	218.5 days	days
Day (standard hours)	27.04 hours	14.1 hours	31.8 hours
Axial Tilt	19.4°	12.9°	7°
Density	1.05	0.87	1.04
# Satellites	1 (Nileer)	None	None

The Mechalus Homeworlds

The mechalus homeworlds orbit the star Agemac, a K-class star just out of the G range and cooling. The system is unusual in that it has two easily habitable planets, Orod and Aleer. Aleer is smaller and warmer than Earth, with a thinner atmosphere that most humans consider acrid because of its high levels of chlorine gas. Its gravity is very close to Earth-normal. The mechalus have inhabited Aleer for as long as the species has existed (according to the fossil record) but have only relatively recently colonized Orod, the planet which was once home to the system's second sentient species. Orod is larger but colder than Aleer, with less seasonal variation.

The system is also home to a hot gas giant named Geshlor, a hothouse planet named Fontis, and a sterile icy rock named Blagieur at the system's edge.

In addition to their home system, the mechalus have colonized more than 20 other worlds in Rigunmor space, including the second worlds of Agema, Afsha, Condree, Colet, Drochi, Galvy, and Maray and seventeen colony worlds and holdings. They are widely settled throughout Rigunmor, Concord, Orion, Insight, and StarMech space.

Mechalus are the dominant life forms on their home planets, but they are the only members of their genus. All other plants and animals are domesticated and carefully controlled, or are weeds and pests that have found niches in Aleer's heavily bioengineered environment, The mechalus see no reason why plants and animals shouldn't be perfected just as they have been. Most surviving species exhibit astounding rates of growth, little or no aggression, and a range of specialized traits useful to industry.

The mechalus have no respect for any life form unable to survive on its own; environmental and ecological worldviews are simply aberrations in their eyes. They see those who hold such views as foolish sentimentalists unable to face up to harsh realities, and often treat them the way humans might treat a mentally retarded person, gently but always condescendingly.

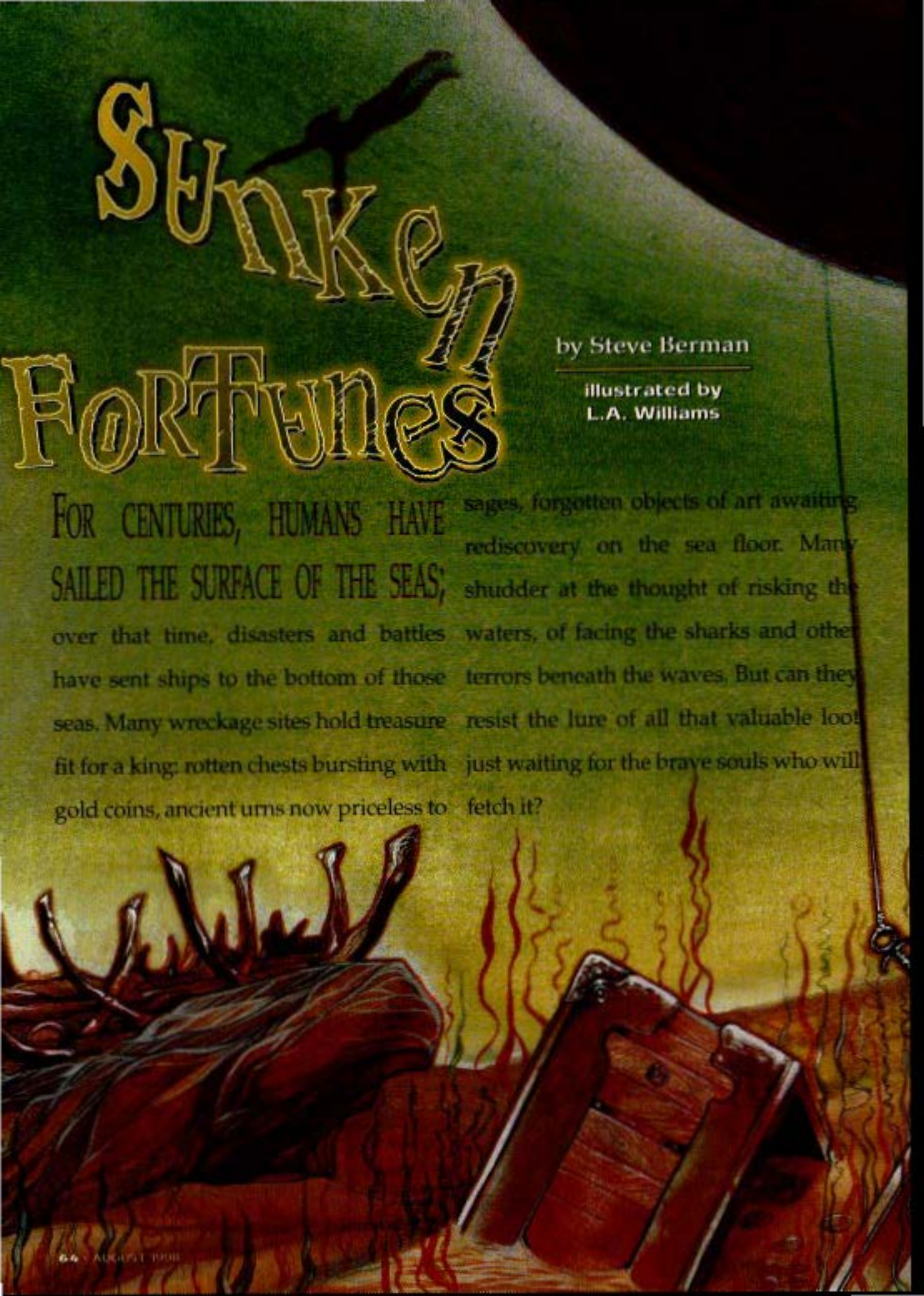
Wolfgang's most recent work has been editing the ***STAR*DRIVE*** *campaign setting. He keeps hoping that he'll grow a mechalus interface tendril to learn new software more quickly (and improve his Quake II scores).*

Sunken Fortunes

by Steve Berman

illustrated by L.A. Williams

FOR CENTURIES, HUMANS HAVE SAILED THE SURFACE OF THE SEAS; over that time, disasters and battles have sent ships to the bottom of those seas. Many wreckage sites hold treasure fit for a king: rotten chests bursting with gold coins, ancient urns now priceless to sages, forgotten objects of art awaiting rediscovery on the sea floor. Many shudder at the thought of risking the waters, of facing the sharks and other terrors beneath the waves. But can they resist the lure of all that valuable loot just waiting for the brave souls who will fetch it?



Sunken Remains

Sunken ships are usually discovered by accident. Local fishermen often know of such sites, because their nets become stuck on the remains. Divers looking for sponges or pearls might also find a wreck. Of course, underwater races such as merfolk and sea elves almost always know of any wrecks, and their maps may include such as marks of reference. Of course, these creatures are also likely to have picked most such sites clean of any treasure!

The condition of any wreck depends on the nature of the water in which it lies. Salt, considered a preservative on the surface world, actually works against submerged wrecks, corroding metal and making the water rich with marine life. Fresh-water shipwrecks are generally found in better condition.

The bed on which the ship finally rests also influences its rate of decay Soft mud and sand can preserve a wreck. The deeper the remains, the less fresh oxygen reaches it, and the fewer organisms survive--though some old sailors warn that the monsters that dwell in the deepest parts of the ocean make salvaging these wrecks far too dangerous.

Ships lost in colder waters are also in better condition, as marine life tends to be more limited in such areas. Salvagers must also then deal with the threat of icy water, employing any available magical sources of warmth.

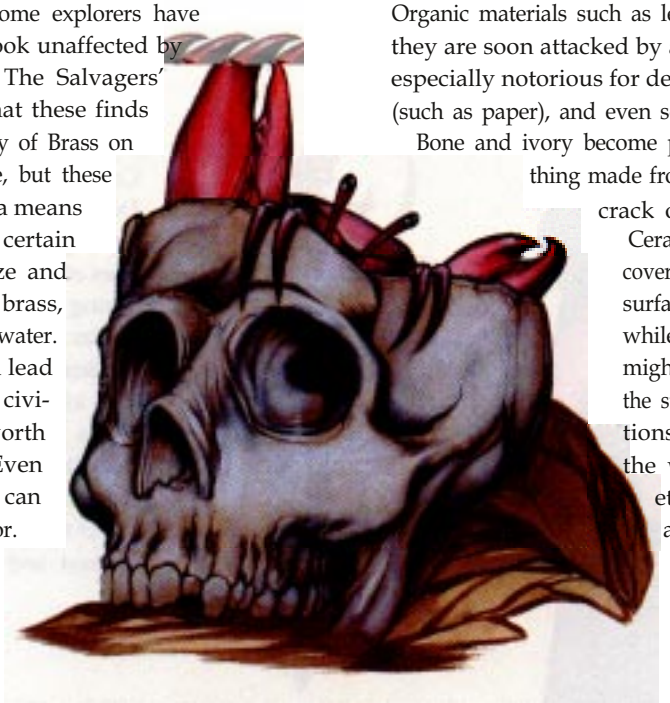
The greatest culprit in the decay of sunken finds are sea worms. These tiny creatures eat away the wood. The hull of a vessel can be infested with such marine vermin, though fortunately they do not live in brackish or fresh water. In salt water, however, these creatures can reduce a hull to an indistinguishable lump.

Muck is also a problem for looters. Most artifacts are sunken deep beside the vessel. Still, it can be more promising to search through the mud on the sea floor, as such buried treasures may be in better condition than those exposed to the water and sea life.

Metals

Common Metals

Brass attracts a covering of barnacles, coral, and even a patina. However, some explorers have found brass objects that look unaffected by years spent underwater. The Salvagers' Guild has made claims that these finds hail originally from the City of Brass on the Elemental Plane of Fire, but these allegations might only be a means for raising the prices of certain recovered treasure. Bronze and lead are affected much as brass, developing a patina in saltwater. Most salvaged bronze and lead objects belong to ancient civilizations, so they are worth more due to their age. Even those in poor condition can fetch a fair price to a collector.



Copper dissolves in sea water, so that which remains submerged for long is destroyed utterly

Iron is also ruined by sea water. Wrought iron rarely is recovered intact, as sea water seems to attack it the worst. Cast iron corrodes, developing layers of graphite around a pitted metal core; this effect can fool a person into believing the object is mostly intact until it is handled and breaks away. Most looters do not realize that iron and steel rust faster after being recovered from the ocean, as the metals are exposed to more oxygen.

Pewter is normally unaffected by sea water, but if it comes into contact with iron, the pewter begins to pit and dissolve.

Tin, like some other common metals, tends to collect coral, barnacles, and also a green patina.

Precious Metals

Gold remains mostly unaffected by seawater. The metal does not attract the growth of barnacles or coral. Though it might be mottled when in contact with other metals, by itself gold becomes highly polished by sea water.

Silver does not fare as well. A natural reaction occurs when silver is sunken. Small pits develop on the surface of the metal. Soon, the metal suffers permanent blackening.

Rarest Metals

Adamantine is one of the few materials that is wholly unaffected by sea water. The metal, like gold, develops a fine shine when immersed. Dwarves have discovered this fact and often finish off a piece of worked adamantine with a month-long brine bath.

Meteoric iron rusts at a much slower rate than terrestrial iron, taking a number of years before it decays beyond use.

Mithril, being a pure essence of normal silver, is similarly affected by long immersion in sea water: the metal blackens. Alchemists have discovered that, if this tarnished mithril is used in the creation of magical arms and armor, the maximum enchantment is limited to +3 rather than +4. Since the blackened metal is lightweight and nonreflective, blades of tarnished mithril are popular among assassins and fashion victims.

Other Materials

Organic materials such as leather fare the worst underwater as they are soon attacked by a multitude of sea life. Worms are especially notorious for devouring wood and pulp materials (such as paper), and even some stonework.

Bone and ivory become porous and brittle. Drying out anything made from bone is risky, as the objects often crack or warp.

Ceramic and porcelain are often found covered in calcareous deposits that mar the surface. Well-fired wares survive intact, while those poorly made often erode and might crumble away while drying out on the surface. Any painted glazes or decorations are nearly always eroded unless the water is extremely still. A slight etching of the surface can occur if any marine life glued themselves

to the object. Pottery is the most common find on shipwrecks, especially those from ancient times. As noted above, ceramics fare better than other materials, lasting well over a thousand years without showing much wear.

Gemstones survive sea water undamaged, though the metal settings might not last, leaving the stones loose and jewelry destroyed.

Marble is attacked by worms, much as wood. Unless the marble sinks into the muck, it most likely becomes riddled with worm holes until it crumbles apart.

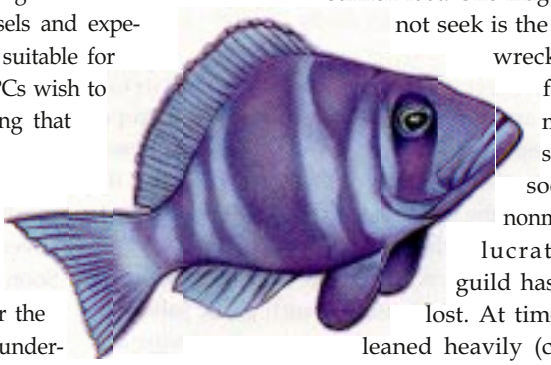
Wood rarely lasts long underwater due to the marine life. Worms devour as much of an uncovered ship as possible, leaving the hull unsafe to be tread upon. Many an adventurer has believed a sunken vessel's planks can hold his weight only to find after the second step that he crashes through the ship's hull.

The Salvagers' Guild

Most adventurers find entry into the sunken depths easier with the assistance of the Salvagers' Guild. This association makes its trade in the discovery of shipwrecks and the recovery of their loot. The guild is most active in coastal cities but has contacts with merchants and collectors in inland areas.

Guild membership is open to anyone who can pay the stiff dues, though sailors receive a nepotic discount. Most guild members are human, with a smattering of the other races, the lowest percentage being dwarven, due to that race's inherent dislike for open waters. Sea elves and half-breeds of that race are especially courted by the guild with waivers of dues and promissory notes.

The benefits of dealing with the Salvagers' Guild while exploring wrecks are many. The guild can recommend vessels and experienced crew suitable for the seas the PCs wish to travel, ensuring that disreputable seaman are avoided. They can sell equipment needed for the excursion underwater, including magical means to breathe water and *potions of sweet water* and *treasure finding*. The guild is always interested in purchasing salvaged items. Where else would the PCs turn to sell a large marble bust found under the muck? Few have the necessary contacts to sell such



The guild also hires teams to recover sea maps, explore old harbor sites, and comb ruins of coastal cities and settlements. Those who help the guild can be assured of a long-standing good relations with members around the seas.

New Spells

The Salvagers' Guild has charged its member mages with creating spells that aid in exploring wrecks and recovering sunken loot. One magical effect they do not seek is the actual raising of wrecks from the sea floor. The guildmasters fear that such spells would soon be learned by nonmembers, and the lucrative niche the guild has would be soon lost. At times the guild has leaned heavily (calling in favors from nobility, hiring the local thieves' guild) upon any wizard who has created a spell that the guild fears might lessen their influence.

The guild sells sealskin scrolls with waterproofed spells. The most common scrolls contain the *water breathing* spell, but also there is a brisk trade in *lasting breath, mending,* and reduce (useful in bearing large artifacts back to the surface). The guild-created spells can be purchased, but buyers must sign a contract stating that they will not sell or transcribe these spells. Penalties for those who do not comply range from stern warnings to fines and even physical attacks on the offenders.

Burnishing Hand

Level: 1
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This is a specialized *cantrip* spell used for removing caked debris, corrosion, and even barnacles from a material. When the spell is intoned, the caster's hand takes on a slight shimmering aura. For the duration, any ceramic or metal object touched by *the burnishing hand* is cleaned and polished to an attractive

state. Note that the spell does not restore the material, so any structural defects are only uncovered. A metal shield found lying under inches of water might have had holes eaten in the surface from rust. The *burnishing hand* would remove the corrosion and shine the metal, but it would leave the pitted surface obvious. A *mending* spell cast after this cantrip helps repair such damaged goods to their original state.

Waterlight

(Alteration)
Level: 1
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 20′-radius globe
Saving Throw: None

Searching the depths for treasure is a difficult task. However, the problem with normal *light* spells underwater is that they tend to attract the attention of fish and other, more hostile creatures. Thus, the Salvagers' Guild had their mages create this version of the spell. *Waterlight* causes a patch of water in front of the caster to glow with a gentle golden light; however, only air-breathers can see the light. Amphibious creatures and races have a 50% chance of noticing the waterlight. Because the lighting is soft, this spell cannot be used to blind a foe.

The material component is an ink vial filled with water and gold leaf (amounting to 5 gp value), which must be opened while the spell is being intoned. Only the vial's contents are expended.

Wreck Compass

(Divination)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Duration: 1 day/level
Area of Effect: See below
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5
Saving Throw: None

This spell is used in the discovery of sunken wrecks. It may be cast successfully only while at sea. The material components include all of the following: a map of the local waters, a gold coin, a scrap of parchment inscribed with the name of the downed ship, a small bowl of salt water, and a brazier filled with driftwood and charcoal.

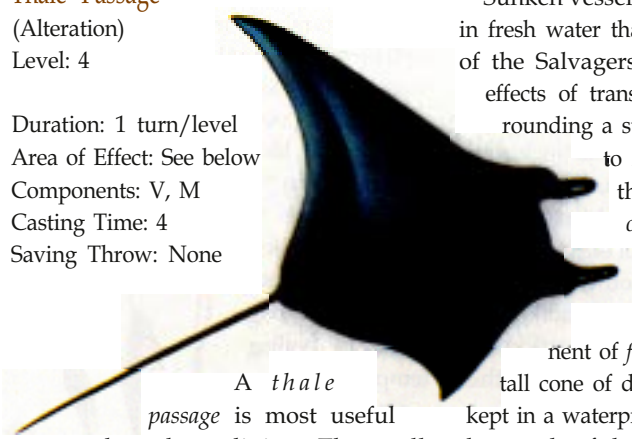
The spellcaster must have a specific wreck in mind. If the vessel's name is not known, then he must also have at hand some remnant from the ship or one of its crew nearby. Otherwise the spell fails. First the scrap of parchment is burned, and the words of the spell intoned. Before the last word is spoken, the caster takes the gold coin and lays it on the top of the water in the bowl. The magic causes the coin to float. The following round the wizard must lay the bowl on the map without spilling it. Instantly, the coin starts to turn, with whatever image has been stamped on the top moving until it faces the direction where the wreck lies.

The *wreck compass* lasts a number of days equal to the caster's level. During this time, the coin shifts when necessary to adjust for the ship's movements, but it always faces the direction where the wreck can be found. When the ship is finally over the site, the coin sinks. Should the spell's duration expire before the wreck is reached, the water in the bow instantly evaporates, leaving the coin to drop noisily

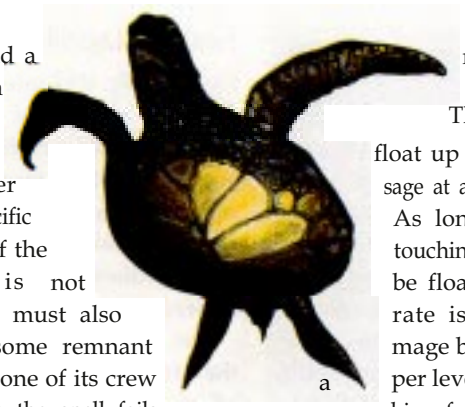
Thale Passage

(Alteration)
Level: 4

Duration: 1 turn/level
Area of Effect: See below
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 4
Saving Throw: None



A *thale passage* is most useful when deep diving. The spell must be cast on a large body of water to take effect. A *thale passage* creates a swirling 20′ diameter tube drifting from the top to the bottom, no matter the distance. This *thale passage* is still filled with water; however, the magical currents inside dissuade normal fish and other marine life from entering the tube.



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The casting mage can float up or down the *thale passage* at a movement rate of 16. As long as the wizard is touching an object, it too can be floated. The movement rate is slowed when the mage brings beyond 20 lbs. per level of experience with him; for every additional 20 lbs. carried, the rate diminishes by 2. Horizontal movement is not empowered by the spell. Other creatures cannot be the subject of this spell.

Once cast, the spell requires no concentration to maintain, except when the mage is inside and floating. The time spent traversing a *thale passage* is not counted against the duration of any form of magical water breathing. An *airy water* spell is dispersed if cast *in* a *thale passage.* The material component is an expensive conch shell found only in tropical waters (50 gp value).

Fresh Surroundings

(Alteration)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Duration: 1 turn + 1 turn/level
Area of Effect: 10′ radius/level
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 2 rounds
Saving Throw: None

Sunken vessels and goods fare better in fresh water than in salt, so the mages of the Salvagers' Guild pondered the effects of transforming the water surrounding a sunken wreck from brine to fresh water. Inspired by the workings of a *potion of sweet water,* they finally created this spell.

The material component of *fresh surroundings* is a 6"-tall cone of dried sea salt. It must be kept in a waterproof bag or coffer. While the words of the spell are intoned, the cone must be exposed to the water. As time passes, the cone grows higher and higher, absorbing the salt of the surrounding water.

For the duration of the spell, the waters in the area of effect are turned to fresh water. Corrosion of submerged

Table 1: Immersed Magical Items

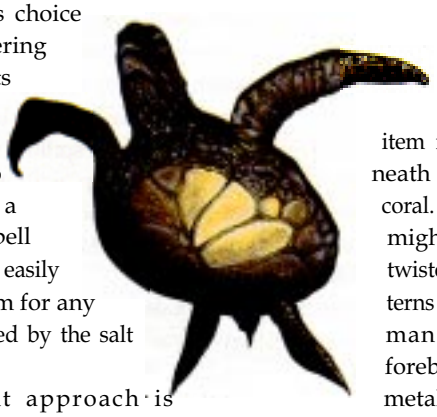
1d20	Results
1-3	The item has been harmed by immersion and retains only a slight aura of its original enchantment. *Detect magic* spells reveal a weak dweomer, but all powers have been lost. The item's condition is also poor. The item can be re-enchanted with the same spells, in which case the item receives a +2 bonus to its save (see the *enchant an item* spell).
4-8	The time spent underwater has weakened the dweomer to the point where the magic works only d4 x 10% of the time. The item's condition looks fair. The DM may consider this state unsuitable for such enchanted objects as arms and armor.
9-13	The item's dweomer remains intact, but the condition is poor. The item suffers a -4 penalty to all saving throws and thus may be easily broken.
14-18	The item at first appears to have suffered (is pitted or rotten), but after 1d3 days on the surface, it slowly transforms back into pristine condition. The dweomer has not been adversely affected.
19-20	Somehow the enchantment has been altered by its long immersion. Roll on the sub-table to determine the effects.

goods also halts, allowing better recovery. Nearly all ocean creatures (including hostile races like the sahuagin) cannot survive in fresh water and instinctively refuse to enter the area of effect of a *fresh surroundings.* Fish and other salt water organisms already present begin to die off and try to flee the area as quickly as possible. The guild discovered that this spell could quickly kill sea worms infesting any wreck. This spell has also been used to drive away vicious creatures, but because the cone of salt cannot be moved once the spell has been cast, its area of effect is limited.

Sunken Magical Items

Occasionally, enchanted items are found amid the remains of a sunken vessel. Sometimes they are the possessions of aristocrats, pirate lords, and sea-going mages who went down with their owners. Or the find might be an accursed or feared artifact thrown into the sea in the hopes of ridding the world of it.

The DM must consider how, if at all, the dweomer of the item has been affected after its long immersion. The simplest answer is to have the magic that enchanted the item also work as protection against marine organisms, rust, or verdigris. This choice makes recovering magical objects all too easy; divers would never need to worry about a detect *magic* spell when he could easily scan the bottom for any goods untouched by the salt and worms.



A different approach is preferable; consider that different dweomers would endure differently underwater. For instance, items tied to elemental magic other than water might show the most obvious changes. Air-related objects might leak a stream of bubbles or be surrounded by a thin layer of ice. Earth-related objects could be encrusted with layers of protective muck. Fire-related magical items might well be ruined or at least weakened. The weakest of enchantments might have been snuffed out or be dormant, requiring a spell like *affect normal fires* or *pyrotechnics* to "reawaken" the dormant magic. More potent items might feel warm or even set the surrounding water to boiling temperatures.

Other items might affect surrounding marine life; healing and restorative enchantments might create such a lush marine environment that the item is barely noticeable underneath the layers of barnacles or coral. Evil or corrupt dweomers might cause disturbing and twisted growths. Might the patterns of black tarnish on a talisman of the sphere not be foreboding? Would dwarven metalwork survive under conditions most of their smiths would rarely imagine?

Of course, enchanted items crafted by underwater races such as kuo-toa, sea-elves, and tritons—as well as water-magic items (magical tridents, pearls, *rings of water elemental command* and the like)-are not adversely affected by years-long immersion in water and will be in fine shape when found.

Tables 1 and **2** offer some interesting effects that can be used for any magical item found after time spent underwater.

Table 2: Altered Magical Effects

1d10	Result
1-4	At least one hour a day the item must be soaked in salt water or lose its dweomer.
5-7	Any time the object's magic is used, all water within 20 yards becomes brackish; potions are ruined 50% of the time.
8-10	The powers of the item may now be used only underwater. Elemental magical items, other than water-based items, are rendered inert.

Steve Berman marks his 30th birthday this month. We hope he gets lots of loot in celebration.

An elephant?

Two ornate masks?

A supra-genius Noctral from Mount Celestia?

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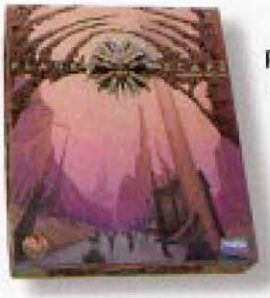

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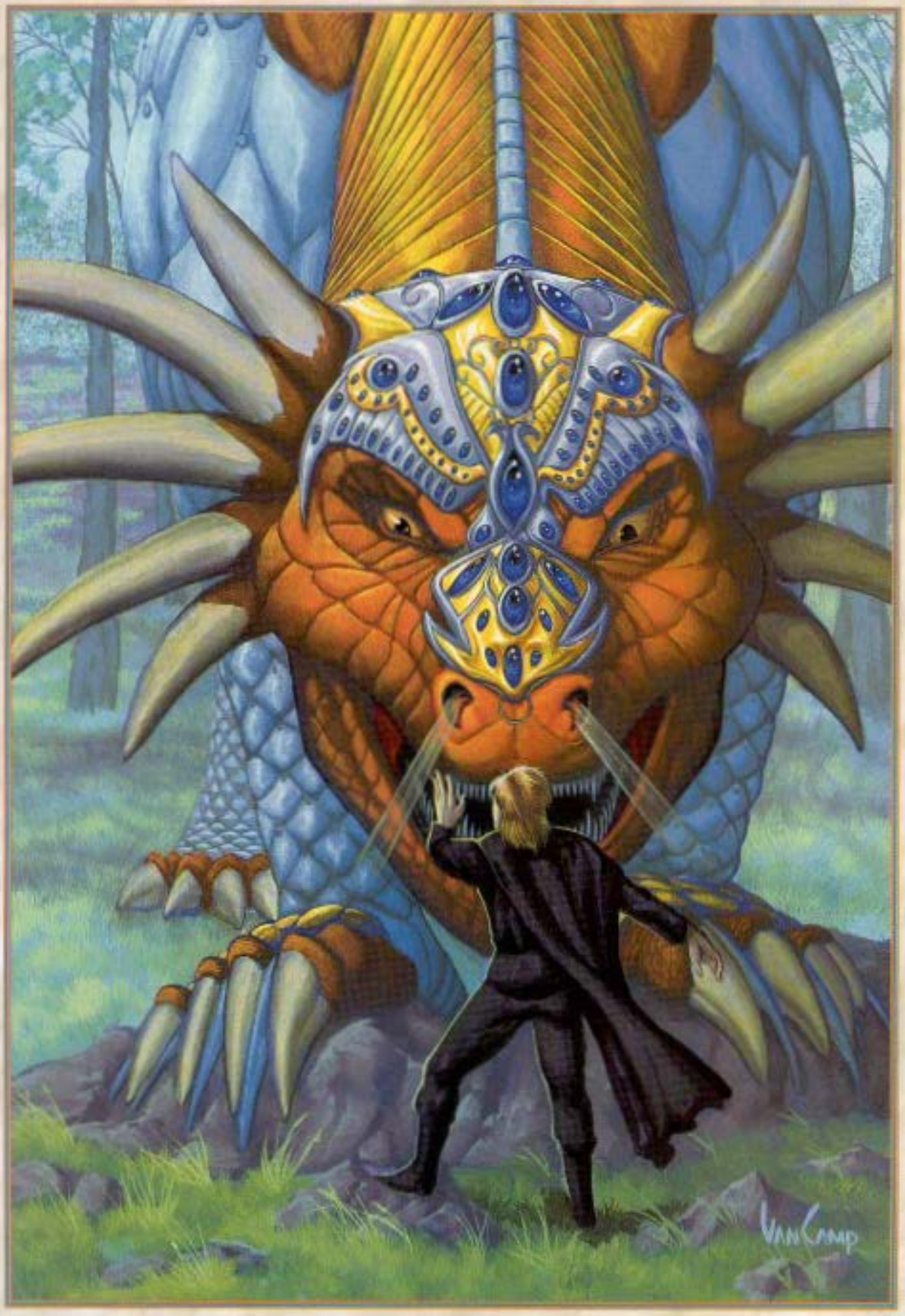

VANCAMP

Dedrak's Quest

by Tracy Hickman

illustrated by
Susan Van Camp

For the fifth time, Dedrak Kurbin Flamishar, the Minister of Peace for the Tsultak Empire, raked the third row of horns on his massive head against the stones of the archway. It made a tremendous noise but relieved the dragon considerably. Just the previous day, he had a new set of ornamental chains fitted; they looped through titanium bands on each of the first five rows of horns. He was not yet used to them, and the third row was irritating him.

Dedrak hoped that the noise did not disturb the musings of the council convened just beyond the massive doors before him. The truth was that Dedrak was upset by far more than annoying accessories to his outfit. The Tsultak Council had called him from a deep sleep to join them in their crisis and offer his advice. As to just what that crisis was-well, the young dragon that had been sent to fetch him was of far lower status than Dedrak and, therefore, had no idea as to why he had been sent for or just what crisis was taking place. Dedrak, whose curiosity was one of his primary faults, left at once.

The Minister of Peace thus found himself poorly dressed as he paced about the antechamber waiting for the Council to call him. His ruffled shirt had been so hastily donned that his right wing had torn it, and he had to fasten the front twice since he had misaligned the holes and buttons the first time. Dedrak looked down at himself for the umpteenth time. The deep blue doublet, he decided, covered the torn shirt nicely. The kilt that splayed around his hindquarters and tail was one he had worn the previous day, and it was badly wrinkled. Still, it was one of his better kilts-perhaps the Council would not notice.

The bolt on the other side of the door drew back. Dedrak reared up under the tall, frescoed ceiling and adjusted his cravat and ceremonial sash. Two puffs of smoke to clear his nostrils, and Dedrak moved into the Hall of Nine.

The dragons of the Tsultak Council lay on their huge fainting couches. Each was set in its magnificently detailed alcove high above the polished floor where Dedrak now quietly walked. Above them loomed the great dome of the dragons' citadel, which looked out on the rim of the volcano in which they lived. Beyond that, the stars glittered in the night sky.

Dedrak folded his foreclaws under him, resting his head on the polished marble floor beneath him with his eyes averted. It was prescribed by the New Code-as was nearly every other aspect of the lives of the Tsultak dragons. "Lord Master of the K'dei and Arch-empiris of the Majestik Sphere-may the celestial spheres shine forever on his magnificence and wisdom. All praise to his righteous reign and blessing upon his clutch and brood. I, Dedrak Kurbin Flamishar, Minister of Peace to the Tsultak Empiris and descendant of the Flamishars of Kharanishal come at thy word and offer my service to the Empiris and her clans."

"Your services are needed in a time of great exigency, Minister of Peace," the salmon-colored dragon spoke from her alcove off Dedrak's right wing. Dedrak, having been addressed, was now allowed to look up. He knew the speakers name to be Tukairana, one of the youngest of the Nine Ke'dai and very attractive. Her canine teeth were particularly large and sharp. Dedrak always thought that she dressed well. "The Empiris is in grave danger."

"Indeed?" Dedrak said cautiously.

"Not since the Tsultak left their dying world and crossed the great blackness have we faced such a threat," Snishankh, the rust colored dragon intoned deeply from his alcove to Flamishar's left. "Clans from our outlying conquests have petitioned us regarding a terrible evil that assaults them. Warrens being destroyed completely. Entire clans vanishing."

The cobalt dragon thundered from her alcove next to Tukairana. Dedrak remembered her name as Tsonksulka.

"It is said that the humans have returned!"

"Humans?" Dedrak snorted a puff of smoke. "With all respect to the Council-may honor be theirs forever and their names trumpeted with glory through all the halls of time-humans are . . . are . . ."

"Legends," agreed Snishankh. "Stories for hatchlings!"

"Stories or not," Tukairana hissed, 'These reports were easy enough to dismiss when they came from our distant outposts. Yet now these very legends seem to be somewhat closer to our home. A human has been spotted on E'knar."

"With my humble deference to the most esteemed and justly honored Tukairana," Dedrak rolled his head in the dragon negative even as he completed the formal declaration, "—blessed be her clutch and brood for generations—you cannot possibly believe these gnome tales! Even if humans once existed in some ancient past, there have been no sightings of a human for over two millennia. I am inclined to believe that they never existed at all."

"I would not suggest such a conclusion to the Provost of E'knar. On that planet-by the Provosts own words-this monster even demanded that the clan offer one of their own young females as a sacrifice," Tukairana rumbled, her quiet voice shaking the stones in the hall. "Clutchless young dragons, if the reports are to be believed!"

"Clutchless!" Dedrak replied in surprise.

"Indeed," Tukairana continued, her speech patterns heated, "although I cannot upon my very life understand what the significance of that would be."

These reports cannot be dismissed lightly," Tsonksulka stated flatly. 'This monster exists, and it is making its way to Tsultaki itself. We are the K'dei, and our will is the will of the Tsultak clans, bonded to uphold the sanctity of our race and preserve the legacy of our ancestors. When last humans were known among us, dragons were nearly destroyed in epic genocide. The K'dei calls for a champion for a holy quest to find and destroy the evil human in his lair. What say you, Dedrak Kurbin Flamishar, Minister of Peace? Are you the champion we seek?"

Dedrak smiled even as he folded his right claw under his chest and bowed down toward the floor. "I would seek out this mythic human creature and, if such a monster is to be discovered, destroy him for the honor of the K'dei and the protection of our clans in the Majestik."

♣♣♣♣

Dedrak returned to his own warren, carefully removed his sash and doublet, and handed them to a dozen of his own E'knari slaves. The E'knari were a diminutive race-smaller even than humans if the legends were true, Dedrak thought to himself. They had been an early conquest of the space-going Tsultak dragons during the Age of the Expanse and the days of the Great Fleet. When the Tsultak first encountered the E'knari, there was a time of confusion where some of the dragon seers of the Mystic Circle thought that the gnomish creatures might actually be human, but such theories were quickly proven groundless. Since that time, the captive E'knari served their dragon masters well, if not always with the most enthusiastic of hearts. There was even some talk among the younger dragons in the various academies and lyceums that the E'knari should be freed from their status as slaves and made lower-caste citizens of the Majestik. Such talk was radical and, at least in Dedrak's eyes, to be expected of the inexperienced young. "One hundred years old, and already they think they know everything," Dedrak muttered to himself.

The E'knari stumbled off under the weight of the dragon's clothing. Each was careful to keep the cloth clear of the floor as they struggled with it into the closet nearby.

Dedrak waited until the E'knari had completed their work and left through the huge doors leading to his central chamber. Once the circular chamber was deserted, Dedrak lifted up his right wing and craned his head around to inspect the damage he had done to his favorite shirt.

"Torn clear down," he huffed with a short burst of flame from his nostrils. "What a shame!"

It was still too early in the morning for his household to be up. His wives would still be resting in their own private warrens adjacent to his own. His young brood tended to rise early, but even their cavorting would not take place for several hours yet. Dedrak knew that he should get some rest, but sleep somehow seemed far off just yet. There were things to be done in preparation for his newly assigned quest. A cascade of thoughts, plans, and preparations tumbling through his head.

"A ship, of course," he muttered to himself. Dedrak always preferred to think aloud-a weakness which, he thought, might lead to his downfall one day. Still, he was careful to do so only in his own chambers. "I shall need a ship if I am to go to E'knar. Battle armor as well. I've the old ceremonial armor, but that is certainly too heavy and cumbersome for this task."

The great dragon warrior snorted billows of smoke to himself. 'This task, indeed! Chasing across the stars after a human! Hah!"

"You find amusement in the night, my lord?"

Dedrak turned toward the intrusive voice behind him; a voice he knew well indeed. "Cachakra, my love. I trust I have not disturbed your rest!"

"My rest is not in question, my lord," returned the deep voice of Dedrak's first wife. "It is your own lack of sleep that troubles me. What pressing issues trouble your mind this night? What news of the Council keeps your thoughts from blissful rest?

Dedrak smiled to himself. Cachakra was a female of high breeding, and her clan lineage was high indeed. In the days before the New Code, dragons were monogamous. The destruction of their home world brought the New Code and with it a different way of life. Harems were expected—indeed, demanded-of those who could afford them. This

insured many clutches and the repopulating of the stars with dragonkind. No matter how noble the ideals, however, this new social arrangement brought with it numerous headaches, not the least of which was the organization of the harem itself. First wife was a position that was earned as a right of combat, and thus one that tended to shift from time to time. The politics of interstellar diplomacy paled compared to those that often took place within a single-family clan. Cunning, diplomacy, raw strength, and a touch of ruthlessness were required basics for a successful First Wife. Cachakra, Dedrak reflected, was a master of all these skills and more.

"I am to leave on a quest from the Council," Dedrak said simply. "They have asked that I hunt a monster on behalf of all the clans."

"Monster, indeed!" Cachakra replied, entering the chamber fully. She wore a quilted nightcoat that was cut just below her wing joints. Beyond that, a flowing kilt of a suggestively diaphanous fabric barely hid her ample flanks. Her claws were bare on the marble floor.

Dedrak could feel his blood run a little hotter just at the sight of her.

"My poor lair-mate," Cachakra crooned. "Sent into the night on some fool's errand. You'll just have to tell them that you cannot possibly go at this time. They shall have to find someone else."

"Cachakra, my love," Dedrak lolled his head from side to side to signify his disbelief. "The Council has ordained it: it is done! My claws are bound in his matter! I am the Minister of Peace, you know. It is my sworn duty to the clan to undertake this very sort of quest!"

"What sort of quest?" Cachakra's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"I am to hunt a human."

"Human?" Cachakra giggled. "You cannot be serious!"

"That is the mandate of the council," Dedrak replied as gravely as he could muster.

"But what am I supposed to do?" his first wife whined. "It's my month starting in the next ten-day!" Cachakra turned her wide flanks toward him suggestively.

Dedrak shook his head. The time he spent with his various wives was something of a sensitive issue with the First Wife. Betrikai, third wife, had produced a surprisingly large number of clutches. Most of his clan had seen this fact as a blessing but Cachakra seemed to have taken offense at Betrikai's good fortune, feeling it somehow reflected on her own abilities. So overzealous was Cachakra with Dedrak during their next time together-in a rotating order established by the First Wife herself-that she had dislocated his shoulder. Her flaming breath had inadvertently destroyed several reams of official papers. Worst of all, she had also left a bite mark on his neck. Decency required him to wear a high-collared shirt and large cravat just to cover up the mark while he was in public. That was eight months ago, and Dedrak could not see any signs of her enthusiasm or ego abating in the slightest as her rotation approached.

Now, he thought, would be an excellent time to be away from home for a few weeks . . . or months.

"Cachakra, nothing would please me more than to spend my entire month with you," Dedrak lied as smoothly as he could. "But the orders of the Council are most specific and urgent. This human-should he exist-could prove a real threat to the clans. Our entire family enjoys the benefits of my position-its wealth, power, and privilege-and if the council requires that I actually do something from time to time, then so be it. I must do my job, or we all say farewell to these warrens, and I look for other work."

Cachakra gave him a look that could have turned his flaming breath to ice.

"I'm glad that you understand," he said. "It is my wish that you have all the harem and my brood assembled in the morning for the leave-taking. I shall return as soon as my task is complete."

"If that is your wish, my lord," pouted Cachakra with a sudden gleam in her eyes, "then it shall be done. Meanwhile, as my lord is restless this night, perhaps you would indulge me a little in advance of the proscribed schedule?"

Dedrak stammered as his first wife turned toward him. She tore her nightcoat from her shoulders and leaped toward him.

Dedrak only hoped she would not hurt him too badly. No, he thought, a few weeks away from home might just be the thing he needed.

The dragonship drifted down through the atmosphere of E'knar. Dedrak bobbed his head with satisfaction as the great sails of the ship were rotated upward. Each held a glowing mystic bubble. The conjuring dragons that lined the main deck in front of Dedrak constantly renewed these globes of light with their murmured incantations. It was one of many ways to travel the stars, Dedrak knew, and just happened to be the one that worked in this particular region. Other places required things called hyperdrives or force-projectors or ether-enducers. As Minister of Peace, his actual knowledge of any of these details was limited. His job was to administer justice and wage war for the clans when necessary. The technical aspects of interstellar travel were beyond his purview.

So, too, Dedrak thought humorously to himself, were wild chases after legendary characters from nursery stories.

Dedrak suddenly winced with a renewed pain in his right shoulder.

Dedrak turned and, with a slight limp, made his way down a spiraling ramp to his quarters at the aftmost part of the dragonship. The ship would take nearly another hour to come to the dock at Zeklak—the last outpost to have reported seeing a human. He could afford the time to return to his cabin.

Dedrak carefully unbuttoned his traveling coat and slipped it off over his wings. The cabin was cramped compared to the warrens to which he was accustomed-merely twenty feet tall and only sixty feet at its greatest length. Such were the rigors of shipboard life, he reminded himself. Space was at a premium. Dedrak draped the coat over the side of a low table before him and glanced again at the sheaf of papers that were spread across its surface.

Legends, the dragon reminded himself.

He reflected on what those papers had told him about

humans. They had not been known among the Tsultak Imperium in over two thousand years. Some of the legends claim it to be closer to three thousand, although the difference was lost on Dedrak. All of the legends from that time centered around some mythic creature called L'kan of the Star-sunderer, who was the greatest and most dread of human kind. His magic and power were undisputed and terrible. Worlds were destroyed through the use of his Star-sunderer—a human device of such awful power that not even the collected clans could stand before it. This thing called 'sword' mastered the dragons and nearly silenced their songs for all time among the stars.

So the legends said.

Dedrak sniffed.

"Nonsense," he sniffed once more. "Little creatures without wings flying among the stars? No taller than the length of my talons and capable of bringing entire warrens to their knees? I'm chasing phantoms of smoke!"

Dedrak picked up his coat and turned to hang it on the wallpeg. As he did so, the great suit of gleaming dragon-armor that awaited him caught his eye. Its metallic scales were polished to a brilliant shine. The great headpiece, molded specifically for his skull, sparkled with over a hundred inlaid gems. The barding for his flanks and the breast plate were magnificently tooled in gold, titanium and silver over the strongest forged steel. The tailpiece alone was encrusted with over a thousand diamonds. The claw extensions were of a metal alloy that held its edge for over a hundred years of battle use.

Dedrak sighed. It was time to put on the heavy armor and prepare for the hunt.

What would humans want from dragons anyway, he wondered?

Dedrak lumbered up on the ship's deck, the planks creaking under his weight. He was in full battle armor, its plates gleaming painfully into the crew's eyes under the E'knari sun. Dedrak looked forward to the respect that his armor always engendered among other dragons of the clan. If only the blasted suit were not so cumbersome and heavy, he thought. Yet as he stepped onto the deck, not a single dragon aboard turned to look at him. Each was craning his neck wide over the port side railing of the main deck.

No one paid attention to his entrance.

Rage threatened to boil up within him at their lack of respect but was quickly replaced by cold reason. Few things could account for such a lack of protocol.

Something must be dreadfully wrong.

Dedrak lumbered forward toward the captain-an ancient dragon named Djekar. The thunderous shaking of Dedrak's movements on deck brought the captain to turn toward the Minister of Peace.

"By all the Stars," Djekar hissed, his lips curling back in fear. "In all my ages, I have never seen the like!"

Dedrak pushed passed the captain to look over the railing for himself.

The ship drifted slowly over the trees toward the massive landing dock jutting out from the rockface before them. Various warrens could be seen in the vertical cliff face and, at first observation everything seemed in order, if a bit quiet.

Then he saw it.

Several dragon carcasses were hanging bloodily from the warrens of the cliff face. Dedrak's gaze drifted downward, following the bloody trail.

In the clearing drifting slowly beneath them lay a scene of carnage. At first, Dedrak's mind refused to accept what his eyes told him was true. Yet the more he observed, the more real the scene became until the linking chains of his armor shook terribly under outrage building within him.

Dead dragons. Murdered. Flayed. Burned. Exploded. Drawn and quartered. Every dragon was stripped of its clothing and left obscenely naked. Entire claws were missing, as was every single head. Every conceivable way to violate the sacred bodies of the Tsultak clans lay displayed openly under the E'knar sun.

"Warriors to the deck!" the captain cried.

"What?" Dedrak responded slowly, his mind still dulled by the butchery drifting below the ships hull.

"The E'knari shall pay for this insult!" Captain Djekar trumpeted loudly. "An attack upon our rightful colony! They shall feel the sting of our hot breath before the day is out! The deaths of our clan shall be avenged a thousandfold!"

Dedrak turned on Djekar. "You shall not, Captain! I am the Minister of Peace for the Empiris. No investigation has been conducted here, nor have the required rituals been completed! It is proscribed by the New Code!"

"New Code?" Djekar snapped back, his nostrils flaring. "This is the frontier, Flamishar! What is the New Code to this atrocity? Where was the New Code when the blood of our kin was being spilt in unspeakable savagery? The New Code . . . it has no place here!"

Dedrak lunged forward, the weight of his armor adding to his momentum as his body struck the ship captain. Djekar was pressed bodily backward against the huge main mast of the ship. The captain opened his leathery wings, but it was too late. Dedrak's own wings already were pushing forward, his forearm pressing the long neck of the dragon captain against the mast. The Minister's tail whipped quickly around, despite the weight of the tail armor, its sharp end pointing directly at a gap between the captain's throat scales.

The New Code is everything," Dedrak intoned with a snarl. "We are a clan of honor and virtue, Djekar! Without the New Code, our songs would no longer be sung among the stars-we would have died as a race long ago. We do not abandon the New Code whenever our bloodlust demands it of us! Do we understand one another, Captain?

"Yes," hissed Djekar. "I hear your words and do obey, lord Minister of Peace."

"You know the penalty for questioning the New Code, Djekar?"

"Yes," Djekar hissed more quietly. "I do, my lord Minister of Peace."

Then consider yourself fortunate that I failed to hear you clearly when last you spoke in haste. I would not desecrate ground so hallowed as that which is before us by adding to it the body of a traitor to our Empiris."

Dedrak released the captain and turned scornfully away from him.

"The New Code separates us from the evil that has been done to us, Djekar," Dedrak intoned somberly. "Now, make landing at the port that I might track down those who have offended our race and bring them to justice-as prescribed by the Code!"

The fitted stone cracked under him as Dedrak leaped onto the pier that jutted from the cliff face. Djekar's ship cleared away from the platform at once and sailed off in the general direction of E'kritanush, the traditional capital of E'knar. Had this been a case of open warfare, then the entire complement would have accompanied him on this journey, but the New Code was quite clear on this subject. This was a Quest for Honor. As such, it was to be conducted singly until it was deemed that the attack was perpetrated by an opposing clan or government rather than an individual. Djekar had specific instructions to keep his craft on station should the situation become clear and assistance be required.

The very real possibility that such assistance would be needed was growing by the moment. Zeklak had been an outpost settlement on E'knar, but it had been well defended, and the dragons of the region were not accustomed to strangers. That so many of his clansmen had been destroyed so swiftly frightened Dedrak. He had his battle armor and was perhaps the most prepared of the dragon warriors of his time. Still, in this moment, as he looked down from the docking platform to the dreadful scene below, he could not help but wonder whether he was up to this task.

In that moment, Dedrak knew fear. It was the fear of the doomed, for he felt himself trapped between the New Code and the despair of facing a horrendous foe. In that moment, the lark of adventure and escape from the machinations of his harem seemed distant and small. His business had become deadly.

He could face the unknown with honor and die, or he could abandon the New Code and live a life not worth the living.

Dedrak stepped down the wide stairs leading to the blood-soaked clearing below. He knew that there was no choice after all. The New Code was what separated him from the butchery before him. It was what made him better than the animals that had committed this sacrilege. He would defend it to his death.

Methodically he examined each of the corpses-or what remained of them. It was grim work but necessary to complete his investigation. He discovered a clutch of broken dragon eggs. The remains of several unborn dragons lay among the shells. The sight sickened him, but he continued, cataloging a list of sins whose outrages would soon surpass anything the New Code addressed.

He was prepared, however, to deal with it. Because he was Minister of Peace, it was his province to mete out vengeance and justice as proscribed by the New Code. By the time he reached the base of the clearing, it was a duty he was well prepared to execute.

Something caught Dedrak's gaze at the base of the clearing just at the tree line. The grasses there had been trampled thoroughly, and the blood seemed to be tracked in that same direction. Dedrak moved forward carefully, craning his great head down closer to the ground. In places the grasses had been churned into mud.

Tracks!

Dedrak looked more closely at the tracks. The prints were unlike any creature he had ever seen. They had a minute stride of less than a talon's length. Longer than an E'knari to be sure, but the E'knari always were without shoes on their own world. These tracks had a strange but uniform pattern impressed into the mud. By their depth he also judged them to be quite heavy.

"By the Stars," Dedrak murmured. "Humans!"

Dedrak slid through the dense foliage. The humans had not bothered to disguise their tracks. Dedrak took this as a sign of their arrogance. No predator would leave so common a trail unless it was contemptuously sure of its supremacy over its prey. Once more, fear tugged at Dedrak's heart as he continued to advance.

Dedrak tracked his prey to a deep gorge. The E'knari sun could not penetrate its depths. Dense foliage carpeted the floor of the chasm, no doubt hiding the terrible humans that now lurked there.

Dedrak said a prayer to his ancestors and spread his wings. With a minor incantation, the magic of his armor was activated, and the dragon soared as gently and as quietly as a feather down toward the base of the deep ravine.

Dedrak quickly picked up the trail once more and drifted quietly through the dense and dark foliage. Quite abruptly, the dense woods that had surrounded him gave way to another scene of carnage. The tree trunks about him had been splintered with their limbs laid flat and twisted on the ground.

"Some terrible battle was fought here," Dedrak murmured to himself as he floated over a massive fallen tree and was suddenly brought up short.

In the center of all the destruction, half buried in the ground, lay a huge metallic egg. It was apparently cracked. A wide, ragged gap ran from the crater up one side and nearly to the top of its curve. The destruction radiated out in all directions from the egg, and the trail had lead him directly to this spot.

Dedrak let out a long, thin breath of smoke as he whispered quietly to himself. "A human egg! Each of their eggs must carry a vast brood-like a clutch of many in a single shell. What a discovery! I could easily be awarded the Star of Nine for this-should I live that long."

The danger of what he was attempting suddenly occurred to him. He was not back in his own warren yet. Dedrak checked his armor and snorted a few times as he stoked his own internal flames in preparation of his approach. When the fire in his belly seemed hot enough and his mystical armor was prepared, he extended his claws and drifted silently toward the ruptured human egg.

The ravine was silent. Dedrak drifted closer.

Something was moving within the darkness of the eggs broken shell.

A sharp sound of metal rang out.

Dedrak shook but kept his resolve, his claw extensions held forward and at the ready. At last, the massive dragon came to the cracked shell itself. Something indeed was moving within though the shell itself. Dedrak's heart was racing and he felt a little light headed. The truth was that he was really too young to be the Minister of Defense. His clan as a political move had arranged the appointment with the majority of the Council of Nine. He had participated in many battles and was an accomplished warrior and statesman, yet never had he come up against anything like this before. Thoughts of the horrors that might lurk just yards away ran rampant through his mind. Yet still he moved closer, as if in some nightmare from which he could not awaken, driven by the Code and by his duty.

Resolve suddenly took hold of him. Dedrak grasped the ragged edge of the metal egg and tore it aside.

A black-clad human looked back at him from under a metal beam that pinned it. Seeing the fierce armor of the mammoth dragon ripping the metal aside not three feet from where he lay, the human cried out in fear and alarm.

Dedrak, shocked with horror at seeing the human screaming at him fiercely not a claw's breadth away, reared back, trumpeted loudly once . . . and fainted.

Dedrak came to his senses.

It was late afternoon, and he was still in the clearing.

There was a human standing a few yards in front of where his head lay on the ground.

"Feeling better?" the human said.

Dedrak instantly leaped to his feet. He sucked in a massive breath with which to defend himself, his claw extensions flashing suddenly in the evening light. He was prepared to strike. The human before took a defensive stance, his hands rising before him with globes of blue light suddenly appearing in his palms.

Dedrak, Minister of Peace for all the clans, spread his wings even as his eyes narrowed. Here was an uncertain target, one whose capabilities were only known in legend and story. Dedrak's head wove around on his long neck, trying to examine the human from various sides while also presenting a moving target to his foe.

"Look, dragon, I only wanted to thank you!"

"Thank me!" Dedrak roared. "You who are unworthy to speak to me dare to offer me thanks for anything? You who have murdered my kinsmen and offended the very life and honor of all the Tsultak dragons across all space and time? I am the Minister of Peace to the Tsultak Majestik. I answer only to the Lord Master of the K'dei and Arch-empiris of the Majestik Sphere-may the celestial spheres shine forever on his magnificence and wisdom, all praise to his righteous reign and blessing upon his clutch and brood. You, hideous creature, shall surrender yourself to the justice of my wrath that your clan shall answer for your crimes life for life and blood for blood! Your crimes are beyond counting in the annals of the . . . of the.. ."

Curiosity. It was one of Dedrak's worst faults.

The dragon's eyes suddenly narrowed. "How is it that I understand your words, human?"

"Ah," the black figure before him continued to move under the dragon's gaze. "It's something of a gift, you might say-from me to you. I just thought it might help us understand one another a little better."

"You have nothing you could possibly surrender to me except your life, worthless creature," Dedrak responded, suddenly coming back to his sense of duty and the New Code. "Your crimes against the Majestik are unprecedented. Surrender or die!"

"Those are my only options?" the human asked quickly.

"In the name of the K'dei, I hereby pronounce death sentence upon . . ."

"I surrender!"

Dedrak stopped in mid-sentence and stared. "What did you say?"

"I said I surrender," the human said, louder than before.

"Liar!" Dedrak roared. "It is well known that all humans are cunning liars and twisters of the truth!"

The black-cloaked human circled around warily, trying to find some advantage. "What if I told you I was lying when I said I surrendered?

"Aha!" Dedrak sneered. "Just as I thought!"

"But then I would be lying about the fact that I had lied," the human shouted back. "Wouldn't that mean that I actually had surrendered?"

Dedrak froze, his eyes narrowing. "Humans! Cunning indeed! Slick words and an oiled tongue. Your legends precede you, evil monster!"

"As do your own legends, great Minister of Peace," the human returned cautiously. 'I know your cause is just. Your clans have been greatly offended by the horrors that have taken place. My organization-my clan-is not a part of what has happened here. Yet there are those humans who are committing these unthinkable atrocities. I have been sent to investigate, just as you have, to stop these . . ."

"Liar!" Dedrak trumpeted and his voice shook the trees the entire length of the valley.

"I do not lie," the human responded firmly. "I am your prisoner. We both want to know exactly what is happening here. I tell you now that, if you kill me, you will never put a stop to what is happening to your clans. However, if you do as I ask, I believe that you will be allowed to mete out the justice that your Code requires."

"Humans lie," Dedrak said firmly.

'That is often so," the human replied. "Trust comes hard-but we must start somewhere. I put myself at your mercy."

In that moment, the black-robed human straightened and dropped his hands to his sides. The glowing magic in his hands vanished in a slight thunderclap.

Dedrak moved swiftly, his coiled neck suddenly straightened as he head lunged with incredible speed directly at the head of the standing human. His mind raced as he moved. Strike while you still can! Never trust a human! His jaws gaped open. His needle-like teeth gleamed in the evening sun.

Trust comes hard – but we must start somewhere!

His jaw slammed shut, his incisors clicking noisily less than a talon's width from the face of the human. The black-

robed figure was sweating profusely but had not moved. Dedrak snorted puffs of hot smoke from his nostrils to both sides of the diminutive figure that was shaking slightly just beyond the end of his nose.

"You are under sentence of death, and I will execute you when I chose to do so . . . but what do you have in mind?" Dedrak rumbled with a low voice that shook the stones beneath the feet of the human.

"A short trip and a little subterfuge on our part should fulfill your quest," the human said as he once more found his voice.

"I will not lie," Dedrak responded.

"I don't want you to lie," the human said after taking a deep breath. "I just want you to keep silent and listen."

The human paused for a moment.

"As a matter of fact," the human said, baring its teeth slightly, "I want you to promise me that you won't kill me until-lets say, until the dawn of this world rises again on your scales."

"And if I should make such a ridiculous promise? Dedrak snorted.

"Then I promise that you'll have that justice that you are looking for-and that you will more than have fulfilled your glorious quest before that same sun rises. It's my promise to you. Now, will you promise as much to me?"

Dedrak looked at the human. *Trust comes hard.*

"Promise me that you will submit to the justice that the Code requires at the moment of that self same dawn," Dedrak's deep voice rumbled once more.

"I so promise-on my honor as a Vestis and on the Nine Oracles of the Omnet."

Dedrak narrowed his eyes once more. "Is such a promise sacred to your kind?"

The human looked over the great snout of the dragon with its small, bright eyes. "It is most sacred to my kind."

Then I promise not to destroy you until the sun of E'knar rises on my scales once more."

The human considered for a moment, then spoke again. "Promise me also that you will not speak again to any human during that same time-unless I speak to you first."

"This goes beyond tolerance!" Dedrak trumpeted. "Humans have always bargained for their lives with lies! I should kill you where you stand!"

"But you will not," the human countered. "I am the key to your discovering the truth. Kill me, and the truth dies with me. Kill the truth, and many more of your clan will fall before the horrors you have already witnessed!

"I have given my word twice," the human pressed once more. "Promise me this one thing more, and both truth and your clan with triumph!"

Dedrak's words were quiet but clearly audible. "Very well, I so promise."

"On your honor and your Code?" the human demanded smoothly.

We must start somewhere.

"Yes," Dedrak sighed. *On my honor and on the New Code."

Dedrak floated quietly through the trees, his human prisoner moving with surprising silence through the bush below. The human wore a red suit that covered his entire body, and some sort of helmet-also completely red-which hid his face from Dedrak's piercing gaze. Dedrak had been suspicious of it at first, until the human had allowed Dedrak to burn, chew, claw, and otherwise mutilate several similar costumes. Each appeared to be rather poorly made-so far as Dedrak could determine-and offered little or no protection against this various natural weapons, let alone his enhanced battle armor. Dedrak had witnessed all of this in silence. He noted curiously that his prisoner had not spoken to him since the dragon had sworn the curious oath. Yet Dedrak also knew that he needed the truth. This one tiny creature did not seem capable of the terrible destruction he had witnessed earlier. No, the truth lay somewhere else.

The trail that Dedrak had followed earlier continued beyond the metallic egg. It was this trail that his prisoner picked up below. Together they wound their quiet way down the valley toward a great confluence of three canyons.

There were several small fires burning around the confluence. Their smoke drifted lazily upward to curl into a thin layer at the top of the canyon's vertical walls. *It obscures the stars,* Dedrak thought to himself.

A glowing dome could be seen in the center of a large clearing directly before Dedrak. The great dragon squinted in the darkness, trying to see the outlines of the thing toward which he drifted slowly. Perhaps if he gained a little altitude he could get a better look, he thought. Dedrak spread his wings slightly, pulling his head higher as his magically enhanced armor began to raise him up.

Suddenly, the armor became dead weight. Dedrak fought down a rush of panic. The mystic spells had failed! He was too low, too slow and too heavy suddenly to stay aloft. Instinctively, his wings began to beat furiously, but the armored bracers that lined the leading edge of his wings hampered them. He began to tumble down through the trees, snapping branches and trunks even as he continued to struggle with the activation gems in his armor plating. He hit the ground with a terrible thud, plowing a long furrow through the brush. Dedrak came to rest on his right side against a rock outcropping, the breath pushed out of him from the impact.

Wheezing, Dedrak turned his head. Several humans, all clad in the same red outfit as his prisoner, were walking toward him from the woods.

His prisoner, however, was waving at the newcomers and shouting. "Nice shooting men! I think you may have taken the prize for this hunt!"

Dedrak tried to strike at the deceiver, but he found that he could not move.

"Who goes there?" came the cry from the approaching figures.

"I'm Luf Darmen," Dedrak's former-prisoner replied. "I'm the scout that brought you this beast, and I demand a full share for my trouble!"

One of the newly arrived humans lifted up his helmet visor and inspected the jewel-encrusted armor of the

dragon with obvious lust. "It's been a long day, but I'm looking forward to taking this one apart!"

"You and me both, brother! Strip his armor while he's still stunned-all of it, mind you! Don't kill him, though! This one's old and feeble-mute and fireless as well. I think we might take him back alive!"

"As you wish, Luf Darmen," the grinning human smiled in reply. "You've done well!"

Luf Darmen, the dragon thought, as he lay paralyzed on the ground, *if I am still living when the sun rises, you will die squealing between my teeth.*

♣♣♣♣

Naked, a humiliated Dedrak was lifted by magical rods carried by each of the evil humans. By this means he was floated into the center of their hideous encampment. The glowing dome he had seen earlier proved to be a much larger version of the metallic egg in which he had found Luf Darmen. Several smaller, similar eggs were set around the edge of the clearing. No, Dedrak realized, they are not eggs. These are the ships of the humans. This is how they cross the stars.

Before him strode Luf Darmen—the human who had betrayed him and brought him to the very center of those who sought to destroy his kind. Darmen led the procession to the base of the largest ship and then stopped. The bearers stopped as well and, indicating with their glowing rods, lowered Dedrak to the ground of the clearing.

The entire procession had attracted quite a crowd. Hundreds of humans began to gather around the clearing. A few still wore their opaque red helmets, but the vast majority of them had removed both their helmets and their red outer garments. Dedrak was suddenly struck at how different the humans were from one another. Light hides and dark hides in all imaginable shades. Hair colors spanning rainbows in lengths ranging from long braids to none at all. Thin, wide, tall, short: all were undeniably human and yet so very different one from another. Dedrak, when he had considered the possibility of their existence at all, had thought that there might be some means of telling the males from the females. It had never occurred to him that such a vast variety of types might make such distinctions difficult for the untrained eye.

A ramp extended from the large ship before them, light spilling from its interior. A single, wide human descended and stood facing Luf Darmen. The wide human, without saying a word, then walked around Dedrak, inspecting his naked scales before coming full circle and addressing Luf directly.

"Nice prize!" he said flatly.

"Yes, Maris Phlyn, it is a great treasure indeed," Luf responded as he removed his helmet, just a claw's length from Dedrak's maw.

Maris's face fell into a frown. "You aren't Luf Darmen!"

"I am Vestis Khyne Enderly of the Inquisition."

A gasp rose from the assemblage at the sight of his face. Several weapons were trained on Khyne Enderly with deadly earnest.

"Maris Phlyn, you are under arrest for the murder of the Dragons of the Tsultak Majestik. You will surrender yourselves to their representatives for trial according to their laws."

Maris snorted. "Or what?

Enderly said simply, "I will do my duty."

"I, too, will do my duty," Maris said with a laugh. "Have you any idea how many mystical societies across the stars want even the most insignificant part of a dragon?"

"It's still murder. There isn't a legitimate government among the stars that would sanction what you're doing here! Humans are not all the same," Khyne said, his voice carrying a little farther than before. "The vast majority of humanity deplores what you are doing here!"

Dedrak shifted his head so that he could hear well. He realized that Khyne was actually speaking for his benefit.

"And I'm supposed to care?" Maris giggled. "Oh, you are funny, Enderly. I'm going to miss watching your news reports. The fact is that your story dies here with you! I don't need to please the masses as you do! Trade in dragon meat, dragon scales, dragon eyes, dragon tails-it might be illegal, but there are enough people willing to pay anything to obtain them that legality might not be high on my list of priorities."

"Humanity considers you a criminal and a murderer," Enderly shouted.

"Murderer? Of what?" Maris yelled back in red-faced rage, pointing to Dedrak as he spoke. "That?"

"You know," Khyne said idly as he folded his arms across his chest and gazed up. "Your mystic dampening technology is pretty impressive." Khyne turned slowly to face Dedrak as he spoke. His hands were cupped before his chest. "By the way, you seem to do well against panicked dragons with long range weapons and against armored dragons with your dampening projectors. That is because the Tsultak have chosen to try living civilized lives. Yet beneath the veneer of their clothes and their magical armor, their Code and their manors, there still beats the heart of a dragon, a warrior, and a predator."

Dedrak's great eyes stared into the eyes of the human standing before him.

"You're a dead man, Enderly," Maris intoned.

"I was just wondering," the Vestis responded, "how you and your gang would fare if you were stripped of your all your smug technology to face a naked warrior dragon who wanted to exact pain for pain done to his clan?"

Dedrak shook within his glowing restraints. His eyes were locked with Enderly's as he inhaled a great breath.

The Vestis turned suddenly, a brilliant blue flash bursting from his hands. The star flew from his hands and slammed against the dome of Maris' ship. The dome exploded, and the lights that had illuminated the clearing quietly died. Muzzle flashes punctuated the darkness from the weapons around the clearing, but few found their mark. Those that did bounced off the dragon scales, whose magic had suddenly returned.

The darkness was complete and, in the sudden absence of light, it was also blinding. Humans stumbled about in the darkness. Several of them called out for light.

Dedrak granted their wish. Searing flame erupted from his nostrils.

♣♣♣♣

The dawn rose over the E'knar wilderness. Billowing flames roiled out of the canyon below Dedrak. Justice had been done. The human infestation had been cleansed.

All, that was, but one.

Khyne Enderly stood next to Dedrak, his soot-streaked face examining the destruction below.

Enderly sighed. "The dawn has risen. The light has hit your scales, Minister. Does your Code require that you kill me now?

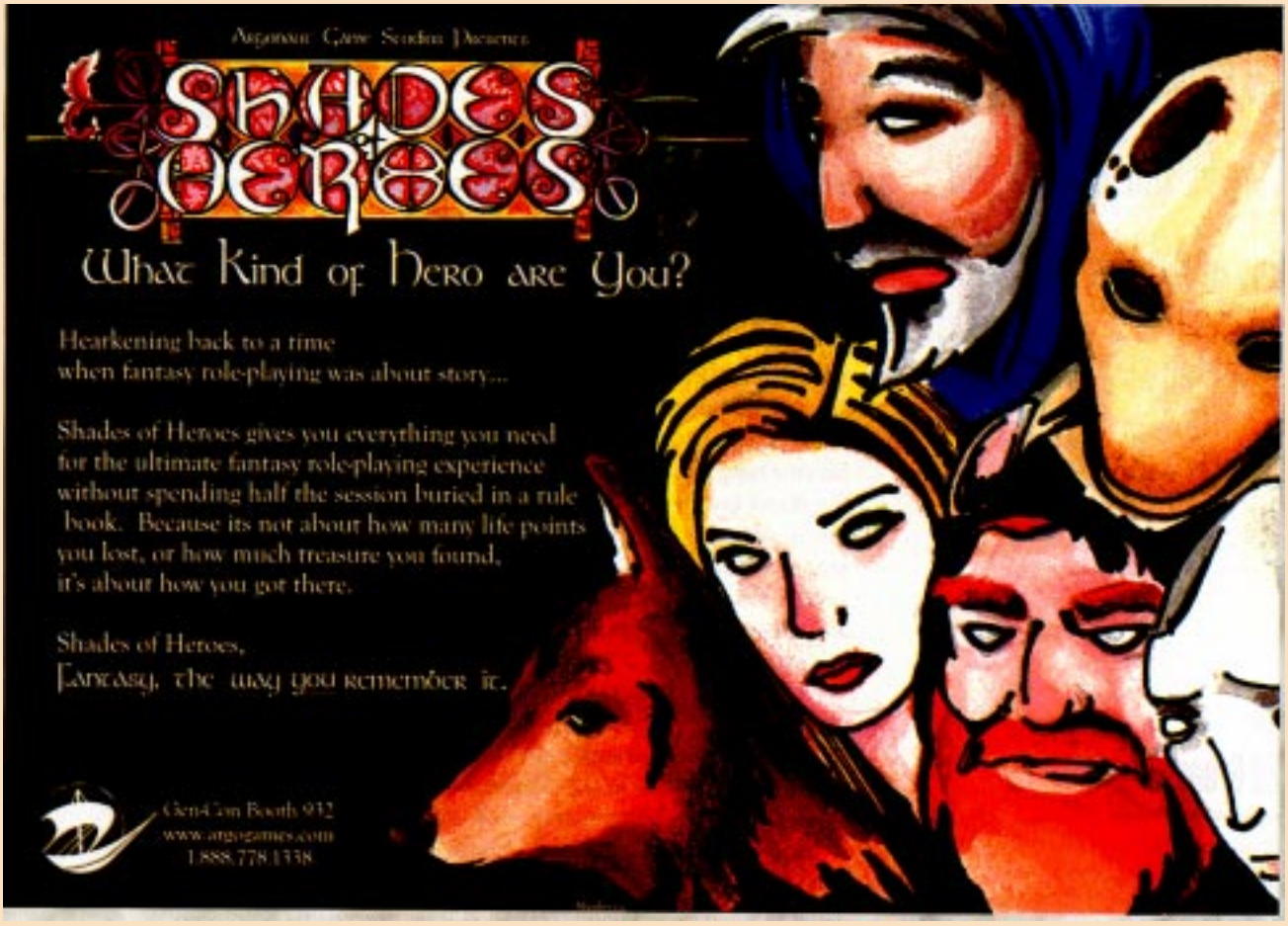
"No," Dedrak smiled. "I may defer that judgment to the Council of Nine. The truth is that I look forward to bringing you before the Council. No one has brought a mythological creature back before the Nine before. Some may be concerned-but not all of us will be your enemy. Not all dragons think alike. Do not judge us so harshly."

Khyne smiled. "And I hope you'll extend me the same courtesy."

'Perhaps," Dedrak rumbled. "Besides, I should bring a present to placate my first wife. A pet, perhaps . . ."

Khyne could not tell whether the dragon was smiling.

Tracy Hickman currently is wasting too much time playing Might and Magic VI *and with his own websites for his own good. He needs to write more and play less.*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THE WYRM WHO WATCHES

Nymmurh

Nymmurh has taken more than one family patriarch or matriarch on a magnificent "last ride," flying them on his back through vicious storms over the Sea of Swords until lightning slays them.

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

THE WYRM WHO WATCHES is known to only a few folk of the North. Almost all of them, outside of a particular Waterdhavian noble family, think he's just a fanciful character in an old fairy-tale that purports to explain why some noble families of Waterdeep are so wealthy. Volo managed to learn rather more in a ten-day dalliance with the young Lady Ravithara Silmerhelve—but as Elminster commented, "If Lord Laerlos Silmerhelve ever reads this, there won't be a fortress strong enough or distant enough in all Toril to save the skin of Volothamp Geddarm from the vengeance of the Silmerhelves. I hear Ravithara wants the father of her baby to return to her side, too."

It should be noted before we continue that the child, Emmeros Silmerhelve, is a strong baby boy who'd have to see more than a dozen of his kin die before he ever became head of the house; he'd not be in the direct line of succession even if his father were an honored noble openly married to Ravithara (a fourth cousin to Lord Laerlos). He is, according to Elminster, blessed with Volo's unmistakable, er, "good looks."

Nymmurh is a figure almost as elusive as the father of Emmeros. This ancient bronze he-dragon has enchanted several mirrors and portraits in the Silmerhelve family mansion in Waterdeep, and in several outbuildings of their country estate, Helvenblade House, northwest of Westbridge. These looking-glasses and pictures now serve Nymmurh as constantly-operating scrying "portholes." He can see, hear, and speak through them at will, though the mirrors and pictures show no sign of his presence beyond a strong but invisible magical aura.

When Nymmurh desires to show himself to observers "on the other side," he need only perform a simple (and almost instantaneous) manipulation of the permanent scrying magics. The mirror or portrait shimmers for an instant, then reveals the head of the kindly dragon "beyond" the wall.

The portholes provide Nymmurh with a constant source of entertainment, as the Silmerhelves live their lives under his watchful gaze. He reveals himself to

at least one family member of each generation, so he can guide the Silmerhelves with timely advice and learn news from them. (Family members in the know often position themselves within view of a known porthole for gossip and important family conferences or confrontations.) Nymmurh's habit of keeping himself secret from most Silmerhelves means that he can surprise treacherous or foolish family members when he acts against them, and he keeps general knowledge of his own existence in the "family legend" category rather than "known family weapon" that outsiders can anticipate. Through the generations Nymmurh has aided many Silmerhelves, usually younger sons who go adventuring, but on many occasions the same individuals when they're in their gray years. Nymmurh has taken more than one family patriarch or matriarch on a magnificent "last ride," flying them on his back through vicious storms over the Sea of Swords until lightning slays them. In return, the Silmerhelves have come to Nymmurh's aid when his lair is threatened or when a marauding dragon has wounded him in battle.

One of the greatest treasures of the Silmerhelves, an elven *stormsword* (described in *DRAGON Magazine Annual* #1), is a gift from Nymmurh. Tales of Silmerhelves coming back from the dead to defend loved ones or to protect them during perilous trips are the work of the bronze dragon, using his magic to take on human form. He is also not above covertly arranging matches for young Silmerhelve daughters.

Nymmurh can scry all of the Silmerhelve portals constantly; according to Elminster, their "other ends" ring the main cavern of his lair like so many floating crystal balls. He has portals at all gates to Silmerhelve properties, in at least one cellar of each home, and wherever there are ovens, large cooking-hearths, or heating-fires (so he can cry alarm if fire, theft, or imminent attack threaten). Sound travels freely through Nymmurh's portals, so he can bellow and be heard in the Silmerhelve abode. Often he mischievously speaks in ghostly whispers or imitates someone who's elsewhere, to alarm visitors who are nosing about where they shouldn't be, or he'll make them think someone is coming or even trick individuals into thinking certain persons are in love with them; he knows reams of love poems and will quote them using the voice of a particular Silmerhelve, addressing them to someone he knows can hear.

The Wyrm Who Watches can also allow things to pass through a portal by calling on its magic to shape a temporary gate. This allows him, another creature, or an object or collection of items smaller in total volume than Nymmurh to travel through the mirror or portrait in either direction. Travel is accomplished merely by touching the mirror or portrait; travelers need not pass (or be able to fit) through its frame. If Nymmurh hasn't activated this ability, nothing happens beyond normal contact with a solid object, when any part of the portal mirror or portrait is touched.

Such portal travel is always safe but has the side-effect of "turning off" any active magics on or surrounding something that passes through a portal. Memorized spells, quiescent magical powers, and enchantments that are present but inactive aren't affected, and if active magics can be made quiescent without ending or destroying them, the portal does so. Nymmurh has used this property to whisk beings safely to his lair, send items to a Silmerhelve, and even to enter Silmerhelve homes himself.

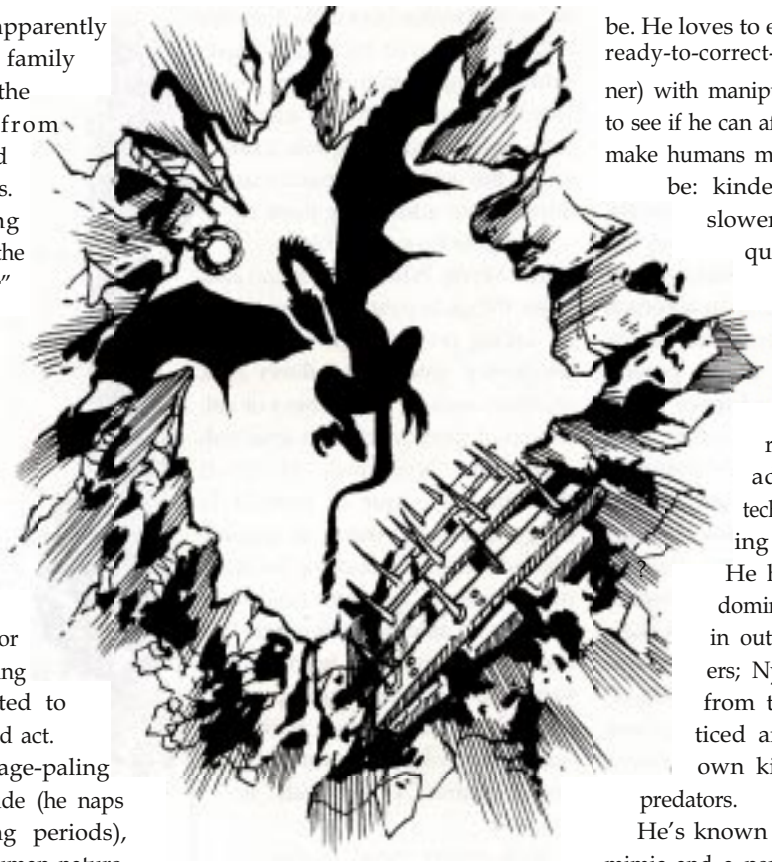
If no urgent need exists, the bronze dragon uses other means of transport; making a "portal trip" ruins the magical link between the mirror or portrait and its scrying-globe in his lair, causing the latter to collapse. The spells that create a new one and link it to the portal once more can be done entirely from Nymmurh's lair, but they are long, exacting, and expensive (in terms of rare, hard-to-obtain ingredients that usually involve hired adventurers-all of whom Nymmurh deals with while in human form, and some of whom are sent after unnecessary ingredients, to keep the list of crucial ones secret).

NYMMURH IS AN INCURABLE COLLECTOR OF SOUVENIRS.
When he attends a revel, he'll bring back his empty glass or a lace doily.

As a hatchling, Nymmurh was whimsical, good-natured, and curious, especially about humans. He stumbled on the portal-magics—about which Volo could learn almost nothing, and about which Elminster could add scarcely more-in the lair of an already-dead dragon. Who that dragon was, and where that lair lies, are secrets Nymmurh has never revealed.

The bronze dragon promptly used the portals to learn all he could about humans by observation. First mentioned in Silmerhelve family diary entries written in the first year of Northreckoning,

The Wyrm Who Watches apparently chose the Waterdhavian family purely at random. Down the years, Nymmurh has from time to time covertly opened other portals in other places. Fear of discovery, being traced back to his lair, and the necessity to visit the "other" side of the portal to create the link has kept non-Silmerhelve portals rare and caused Nymmurh to destroy or close those he doesn't deem necessary. The bronze dragon desired to learn about humans because he saw them as the "great shaping force" that would rule over or influence all of Faerûn during his lifetime, and he wanted to know how humans think and act.



Now a great wyrm of age-paling scales and increasing lassitude (he naps often, sometimes for long periods), Nymmurh is an expert in human nature, including changing fashions and thought among Waterdhavian upper-class humans over a span of more than a thousand years. He knows thousands of human jokes, songs, and rhymes, and sometimes uses when speaking through a portal to conceal his draconic nature. If he wants to conceal his true form from someone, he usually takes the shape of a Silmerhelve ancestor and does what he has even advised the human sage (and authority-on-dragons) Velsaert of Baldur's Gate about the nature of dragons and recent Sword Coast draconic doings.

The Pit is a large and intricate network of caverns, a dozen of which are large enough for Nummurh . . .

According to Velsaert, Nymmurh views other dragons much as he views humans: as potentially dangerous sources of entertainment it's prudent to learn all he can about. Nymmurh tries to hide his existence from other dragons as much as possible, swooping down on his larder-isle to feed by night, and otherwise almost never venturing out of his lair in dragon form. He employs a variety of "favorite" human forms that he calls "the haunted portrait trick," acting as the long-dead Silmerhelve whose portrait he's staring out of, while wearing his or her face. If he wants personally to visit a Silmerhelve house, he usually takes the form of the mumbling-mad Lady Saerista Silmerhelve (of whom more is said below).

The key to Nymmurh's character could be his constant need to learn more about Toril around him, and its human inhabitants in particular. Even after an age of watching and observing, the bronze dragon is still fascinated by what humans get up to, and why-and how predictable and unpredictable they can be. He loves to experiment (in a kindly, ready-to-correct-his-own-mistakes manner) with manipulating the Silmerhelves, to see if he can affect human fortunes and make humans more as he'd like them to be: kinder, gentler, wiser, and slower to act before consequences are considered—and far friendlier to bronze dragons. He also likes to try to guess what lies ahead in the broader sweep of realms rising and falling, advances in trade and technology, and so on, finding it all very entertaining. He has no need to rule or dominate, and he finds no joy in outwitting or trapping others; Nymmurh loves to watch from the background, unnoticed and unmolested by his own kind and other passing predators.

He's known to be an accomplished mimic and a persuasive speaker, able to "convince folk right out of their stockings" (as Elminster put it) and to successfully impersonate folk more or less at will: that is, to make people believe he's a merchant of Amn or an escaped slave from Thay, not the wizard Elminster or Bloskrin Thuulbrin, Fine Fur-Dealer Extraordinaire from Westgate.

Nymmurh's Lair

The bronze dragon's lair is located high among the most inaccessible peaks of Alaron. From there he raids the High Moor and one of the islands in the Korinn Archipegalo (which he long ago stocked with hardy goats) for food. The bronze dragon affectionately refers to his cluttered labyrinth-of-caverns home as "the Pit." This has caused some adventurers over the years, a-hunting dragon treasure, to mistakenly seek deeper delvings. (Usually they find meenlock-haunted mines in the vicinity, and come to grief if they're not smart enough to flee before being surrounded and overwhelmed in the lightless passages.)

The Pit is a large and intricate network of caverns, a dozen of which are large enough for Nymmurh to laze or glide

around in, in his own form. They can be reached by a shaft that leads straight up through the heart of a lofty peak, but which the bronze dragon guards with a large grating of sharp, 40'-long spikes that menace anyone falling or flying down the shaft. The grate can swing downward and into a side-alcove, out of the way, but it is almost always locked in place, a forest of deadly blades that prevents dragons from dropping in uninvited. Made by titans long ago for a now-destroyed fortress of their own, the grate consists of many smaller spears and swords fixed upright between the huge blades, so as to endanger creatures of all sizes larger than a fox or hawk. It is smeared with pitch so as to retain a cloak of powder (a mixture of natural substances that neutralize acids), and it bears a permanent *globe of invulnerability* enchantment.

The side-passages and caverns of the Pit are smaller-too small for a full-grown bronze dragon. One of these tangled networks of ways leads some miles away, to a connection with the surface: a small cave-entrance under the waters of a cold, swiftly-flowing mountain river. This cave is inhabited, and guarded for Nymmurh in return for gifts of food, by Annaclathaer, a marl (q.v., *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual* Volume Two). Their long-standing agreement has become a firm friendship, and if the marl breaks a magical glass "signal chime" Nymmurh gave him, and the bronze dragon is at home to hear it, the great wyrm speeds to Annaclathaer's aid, ready to fight any foe.

The smaller caverns of the Pit are crammed with odd, old items of all kinds; Nymmurh is an incurable collector of souvenirs. When he attends a revel, he'll bring back his empty glass or a lace doily; after matchmaking a pair of Silmerhelves into their first kiss, he's quite likely to tear up and take away the stone cemetery bench in the City of the Dead that they met upon. Fragments of boats that were wrecked on the rocky coasts near his home (or upon the isle where he keeps larder) are here, some spilling out their ballast-stones or long-perished cargoes.

Although magical items and true treasure are both rare among all the clutter, they do exist, hidden away in side caverns reached only by dint of a lot of heaving aside items and clambering over others. Nymmurh once helped a foolish young Silmerhelve pay off a debt by showing up with a million gold pieces (which he dumped around the creditor in an imprisoning ring while in dragon form, just to impress everyone involved) and has on several occasions gifted Silmerhelve couples, at their nuptials, with small but useful magical items. Two stone golems (salvaged from ruins) stand hidden among all the heaped items, ready to attack intruders at the dragon's command.

Nymmurh's Pit has one other resident: the mumblingly-mad Lady Saerista Silmerhelve, rescued by the Wyrm Who Watches from the cooking-spit of the orc patrol who captured her. lucid moments, she shuffles about whispering to herself, her gown in revealing rags and her hair an unkempt, dusty forest. Saerista has seen some 60 winters and is quite content to remain in the Pit, eating what Nymmurh brings her, reading books from among all the heaped belongings, and exploring those belongings in an endless excavation of wonders. She knows who and what Nymmurh is, and that he's "the Guardian of the Silmerhelves"—and privately considers him a disguised god who rescued her out of kindness. If she can ever find some way to repay him, she will. Her treatment by the orcs drove her from befuddlement to outright madness, and she's often completely unaware of the world around her. At such times, she's quite likely to speak in many strange voices, as if a dozen different folk were sharing her skull. Saerista can be unnerving, but she's harmless, not a suddenly-murderous maniac. Anyone who threatens or attacks Nymmurh

SAERISTA CAN BE UNNERVING,
but she's harmless, not a suddenly-murderous maniac.

Nymmurh's Domain

Nymmurh ignores the concept of domains, cheerfully roaming the North (the Sword Coast and its near-offshore isles in particular) regardless of what other dragons may dwell nearby or claim the territories he traverses. The only areas he'll defend against intruding dragons or other creatures are his own lair and his larder island. He regards the Silmerhelves as under his protection, but he won't diligently watch over young wayward family members out seeking their fortunes; he looks after those who aren't engaged in "discovering themselves" and doesn't regard himself responsible for the survival and successes of each individual Silmerhelve. If the family is ever threatened with sudden extinction, he plans to swoop in and kidnap a few family members to hide them far away so they can continue the family line while he makes things safe in Waterdeep for their eventual return.

The Deeds of Nymmurh

Like most of his kind, Nymmurh favors shark meat above other fare, but this only leads him into occasional plunges down to join a "feeding frenzy" shark gathering he observes when flying over. Largely disinterested in food, Nymmurh is content to dine on the goats of his larder isle, though he takes a keen interest in procuring a varied and interesting diet for his "guest" Saerista, so he is constantly trading coins he comes by for bottled sauces and pickled oddities to bring home to the Pit for her. Nymmurh spends more time observing Faerûn through his Silmerhelve portholes than anything else, but he does go on forays every tenday or so, to "gather things" and "get out and breath air as humans do." This air often seems to be the smoky, overperfumed sort that prevails at revels; Nymmurh loves human parties for all the chatter and how folk behave when they're tipsy or trying to impress or being deliberately catty or outrageous.

So far as is known, Nymmurh has never taken a mate nor shown any interest in having offspring or even acquiring alliances with other dragons. Acquiring things is a hunger in him, but not necessarily keeping them-and the things need not be "treasure" as most creatures regard it. An interesting whittled tankard-coaster would catch his eye over a pile of gold pieces.

Nymmurh's Magic

The Wyrm Who Watches keeps his interesting, useful, and powerful scrying-link spells secret indeed, but Volo was able to learn something of his lesser magics (spells he passed on to various Silmerhelves, down the years), and one of these follows.

Jumpgout

(Evocation)
Level: 5
Range: 60 yards
Components: V
Duration: 2 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: 1/2

When cast on dry land, this spell produces a vertical pillar of roaring flame, five feet in diameter and up to 30 feet tall (less if a ceiling or other overhead barrier exists), which is sometimes mistaken for a priestly *flame strike* spell. The flames deal 4d6 hp damage to any creature they touch (half that if a save is made), then "jump" away, translocating themselves 1d4 + 1 (x 10) feet distant, either in a random direction or roughly in a general direction concentrated upon by the caster (within a 90-degree arc of the caster's desired direction). In their second and last round of existence, they cause 3d6 hp damage to any creature they touch in this second location, then die away in a swirl of sparks. Flammable items must, of course, make saving throws vs. magical fire when touched by a jumpgout.

Underwater, a *jumpgout* spell creates a swirling seam of boiling water that can't "jump" about and lasts for two rounds in the same spot, affecting a cylindrical 10'-diameter, 40'-long volume of water. All creatures within this area suffer 3d4 hp damage on the first round and 4d4 hp if they are still within the area during the second round (the save for half damage still applies).

Nymmurh's Fate

Nymmurh is likely to continue on through the decades much as he is today, until a powerful and merciless dragon or mage (more probably, a cabal of mages, such as wizards of the Arcane Brotherhood or Cult of the Dragon) learn of his existence and launch a concerted attack. Nymmurh could well fall before he could muster defenses enough to stay alive.

He would also suffer acute distress, personal danger-and at the least, an upheaval of his tidy lifestyle-if a truly evil and ambitious Silmerhelve arose and kept his or her intentions hidden until a successful attack upon, or manipulation of, Nymmurh could be accomplished. No such Silmerhelve seems likely to develop in the current generation, and the bronze dragon has dealt with overly ambitious Silmerhelves in the past by manipulating their kin to unmask their true natures and to deal with them.

Nymmurh could also die of old age or fall in a chance encounter with a younger and more vigorous dragon. He also just might finally feel the urge to father heirs of his own and begin the dangerous hunt for a suitable bronze dragon mate.

Interestingly, Saerista has (completely on her own) begun to search for the whereabouts of other bronze dragons, employing old maps, lorebooks, and a magical mind-scrying crown (all found among the vast mounds of accumulated oddities in the Pit). Is she reading Nymmurh's mind or responding to wistful things he's said? Does her plot involve changing herself into a dragon? Conceiving the offspring would be impossible without magical aid, and probably deadly to her in any event, but she might not know that or perhaps chooses to deny it.

Nymmurh can't have failed to notice her studies, but so far he's pretended not to notice. Volo, Elminster, and so of course we, too, can only wonder why.

Ed Greenwood *is glad he's never seen some of the spells he's devised over the years for the AD&D® game work for real. He grants, however, that they might come in handy should one of his monsters appear in the garden.*

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Aquatic Creatures

They might look harmless, but these denizens of the sea can still surprise your seafaring heroes.

by Johnathan Richards

illustrated by Stephen Schwartz

ONE WAY A DM CAN KEEP HIS PLAYERS GUESSING is to introduce new monsters into the campaign. This becomes especially important when the players have many of the "standard" monsters and their weakneses memorized. When the DM runs an adventure in an unusual environment, introducing unfamiliar creatures keeps the game fresh.

Many players think only of the danger of sharks, sahuagin, giant squid, and other well-known denizens of the sea. While their PCs have fought a wide variety of monsters in the deepest jungles, the highest mountains, or deep in the bowels of the earth, they are still unfamiliar with many of the creatures living in the ocean. This is actually ironic, when one considers the volume of water covering our own planet (and presumably most game worlds, save Athas, the world of the DARK SW campaign setting).

The creatures that follow are all found in an aquatic environment, and they typify the diversity one finds when examining the organisms that make their homes in the waters of the Earth. Of these four new creatures, one is a fish, one an insect, one a marine mammal, and one a plankton-like colony of plant cells. Some of these creatures are harmless, while others can kill in a gulp. Some are raised as oceanic "farm animals," while others roam the waters at will and know no master. Incorporating these creatures into the campaign becomes a matter of DM ingenuity. Here are some examples:

- A DM can increase the peril of ship-to-ship combat by having the battle occur on an ocean expanse covered by black slime. Imagine the horror as the heroes' ship begins sinking into the dark morass.
- A school of giant clownfish, diverting the attentions of undersea heroes, are the perfect distraction for sea sprites eager to pilfer the heroes' treasures and hide them amidst the tentacles of their giant sea anenome guardians.
- The delicate ecology of a lake could be upset by the presence of giant diving beetles, and the heroes could be hired to remove the threat.
- DMs who are intrigued by underwater adventuring but want their heroes to work for *those* potions of *water breathing* are encouraged to read the sea cow entry. An adventure based around a sea cow hunt could provide endless role-playing opportunities, with many potentially humorous mishaps along the way

These four are only a drop in the bucket of strange, new aquatic creatures just waiting to be discovered.

Johnathan Richards would like officially to dedicate the giant clownfish to his 12-year-old son, Logan "Bogey" Richards.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Ocean surface
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	9
MOVEMENT:	0
HIT DICE:	2
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (1'-4')
MORALE:	Average (10)
Xl' VALUE:	175

Also called oil slime, black slime is an aquatic version of the colony creature known to subterranean explorers as green slime. Looking much like a small oil slick, black slime floats on the top of the ocean, attacking creatures with which it comes into contact. It has no means of self-propulsion, moving about only at the whims of the winds and the waves.

Combat: Like both green and olive slime, black slime attacks all living matter that it touches, absorbing it into itself and creating more slime in the process. Any living creature, whether plant or animal, that brushes against the black slime colony finds slime adhering to itself. Within four rounds, that creature turns into slime. However, unlike both green and olive slime, black slime has a limited ability to change its basic shape-it can form strands that float below the surface of the ocean. These strands act like the tentacles of a jellyfish, allowing the slime to adhere to any fish that might pass beneath it.

Black slime attacks anything touching its upper surface as well. A swimmer bumping into a floating patch of black slime finds himself coated in the stuff, as does a sea bird landing in it. If a victim can scrape the slime away quickly, he can save himself. Unfortunately, it's much more difficult to scrape black slime off of one's body while in the water than it is to scrape green slime off while on land, as scraped-off patches usually float right back into contact with the victim's skin, and a person in the water doesn't always an object with which he can scrape off the slime.

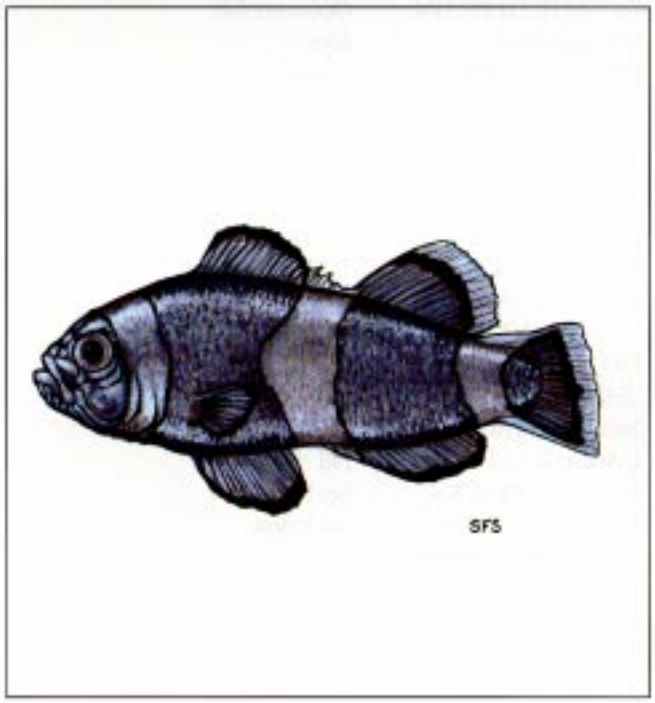
Black slime is a form of plant life and is subject to spells affecting plants, although even some of those are virtually useless. A *hold plant* spell, for instance, does not prevent black slime from moving, for the movement is a result of wave action, not any intention on the slime's part. Black slime is immune to cold-based attacks but burns readily upon contact with flame (another reason for the name "oil slime"). Cure *disease* spells instantly destroy a black slime colony, but the creature is immune to most other spells. and weapon attacks cause it no damage.

Habitat/Society: Black slime is a colony creature but has no intelligence of its own. Like other slimes, it has a limited awareness of the world around through its ability to sense vibrations, which allows it to target prey. As the colony absorbs other creatures, it grows in size, eventually splitting into two approximately equally-sized colonies, each with the creature's original Hit Dice. Several colonies are often found together, but this is merely the result of the tides. Every once in a while, several colonies drift together and form an extra-large patch of slime floating on the ocean, but these do not stay together long, nor do they merge into a single creature--once separated, black slime does not unite together again.

Ecology: Unlike green slime, which also eats through metals and wood, black slime dissolves only living matter. For this reason, many sailors and pirates actively harvest the stuff. The slime, when carefully poured into a glass vial, can be stoppered and stored for 4d4 days (until the isolated slime starves), then used as a weapon against enemy ships. The vials are catapulted onto enemy ships to break and splash all over the enemy crew, or can be sent hurling at the enemy with a flaming wick attached, creating an organic version of the Molotov cocktail. Black slime vials are treated as flasks of oil when used in this fashion; consult Table 45: Grenade-like Missile Effects on page 63 of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* (see also "Incendiary Attacks" in *Of Ships and the Sea,* pages 41-43) for details.

Clownfish, Giant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tropical, subtropical, and temperate oceans
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	School
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	2-12
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	Swim9
HIT DICE:	1+2
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	Nil
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to paralysis
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (3′ long)
MORALE:	Unsteady (5-7)
Xl′ VALUE:	65



Larger versions of the tiny tropical clownfish, or clown anemonefish, the giant clownfish is brightly colored, its body a brilliant orange vertically striped with wide bands of white. Each white band is bordered on both sides with a narrow black band, and the tail and fins are each black at the tips. Like their smaller cousins, they are immune to the stings of the sea anemone and spend much of their time safely within the waving tentacles of such creatures. Giant clownfish are often called "bogeyfish" or "bogeys."

Combat: Giant clownfish are harmless to man-sized creatures, as they have no teeth and can swallow only creatures smaller than their own mouths. In extreme situations they can "head butt" creatures that get too close, but this maneuver causes no damage, merely passes on the information "you're not welcome here." However, giant clownfish are associated with several much more formidable sea creatures.

In the wild, giant clownfish are most often encountered within the vicinity of a giant sea anemone (details on these creatures are found *in* MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Volume 4: DRAGONLANCE® Appendix* under "Anemone, Giant"). Clownfish exude a slimy coating that protects them from the anemone's paralytic stings, so they are safe from most creatures while nestled within the anemone's tentacles. If egg-eating fish or small marine creatures move too close to a clownfish's nest, it can scare off the intruders by making loud clicking sounds.

In addition, many giant clownfish are raised by sea sprites, who like them for their vivid coloration and often use the clownfish as riding mounts. The clownfish do not mind such servitude, as they are then protected not only by the sea sprites but also by the barracudas that many sea sprites use as guards and pets. Barracudas in service to a sea sprite community do not attack giant clownfish also in service.

Habitat/Society: Because they like staying close to the giant sea anemones, giant clownfish are often found living together in small schools. Clownfish are frequently preyed upon by sharks, rays, and large fish as well as ixitxachitl, sahuagin, and crabmen.

In addition, the giant sea anemone serves as a food source for the clownfish, who often eat the tiny sea creatures that occasionally are caught in the anemone's tentacles. They also eat algae that forms on sea coral.

The female lays hundreds of reddish-orange eggs at a time, usually along the sea floor next to a giant sea anemone. The male, smaller than the female, follows in his mate's wake and fertilizes the eggs immediately after they're laid. It is the male's job to guard the eggs during the two weeks or so that it takes for them to hatch. Newly-hatched clownfish are translucent and immediately go off on their own to feed. They gradually take on the standard coloration and find homes for themselves among giant sea anemones.

Ecology: Giant clownfish make their homes in shallow, tropical waters. They are seldom encountered far from giant sea anemones or sea sprites, preferring the safety afforded them by either of these creatures. Sea sprites can swim much faster than clownfish but still enjoy using them for riding mounts when they aren't in any particular hurry. Many giant clownfish spend their entire lives in sea sprite communities, even when not being used as a means of transport-the clownfish are safer there, and the sprites enjoy the sight of their brightly-colored "bogeys" swimming around back and forth.

The giant clownfish's immunity to sea anemone stings carries on to other forms of paralysis. For this reason, giant clownfish blood is often used in the inks by which scrolls of *protection from paralysis* are made.

	Larva	Adult
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	-Freshwater ponds and lakes—	
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Common
ORGANIZATION	solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET	Carnivore	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)	Non-(O)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-12	1-6
ARMOR CLASS:	5	2
MOVEMENT:	6,Swim6	6, Swim 15, Fly 9 (C)
HIT DICE:	2	4
THAC0:	19	17
NO. OF ATTACKS	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-8	1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Acid	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (4′ long)	M (5′-6′ long)
MORALE	Champ. (15-16)	Avg. (8-10)
Xl′ VALUE:	120	175

Giant diving beetles have three stages of development: larva, pupa, and adult. Giant diving beetle larvae look little like beetles. The body is long and thin with enormous mandibles. Coloration is always light: they are translucent when they hatch and gradually become light yellow or orange. Pupae are white and fat but rarely seen; hence, no statistics are provided. The adult form looks much like a standard beetle, with a hard greenish-black outer shell that looks green underwater. Their hind legs are very long and thick, with paddle-like extremities.

Combat: Giant diving beetle larvae are often called "water tigers," both for their coloration and their ferocity. They remain motionless against a clump of reeds or other plant stalks, then pounce upon any prey that comes near. Their mandibles inflict 1-8 hp damage and inject an acidic substance that liquifies the prey's body. Victims of a giant diving beetle larva's bite must save vs. poison or suffer an additional 1-6 hp damage. Once a larva has a victim in its mandibles, it hangs on until the prey dies or makes a successful bend bars roll. Each round in the mandibles, the victim suffers both bite and poison damage.

Adult giant diving beetles, on the other hand, are scavengers. If attacked, they bite with their mandibles, but these are much smaller than those of the larval form and cause only 1-4 hp damage. Adults have no acidic poison attack.

Habitat/Society: Giant diving beetles are solitary creatures, coming together only to mate. Mating occurs in water during the springtime. The male beetle has suction disks on his front legs to keep him attached to the female's slippery shell. The female lays the eggs near water plants. (Some bite small holes in plant stems and deposit the eggs there.) After three weeks, the eggs hatch into larvae.

In its larval stage, the giant diving beetle is ferocious. Larvae devour up to 30 victims a day-usually snails, small fish, and worms. Over the next several months, they molt three or four times. This is always done in shallow water, where access to air is easy. (Both larvae and adults breath by trapping air in their bodies, and in each case they need only stick the hindmost tip of their abdomens above the surface of the water to replenish their air supply.)

In late summer or early fall, the larva digs a burrow for itself underwater, fills it with air bubbles it brings from the surface, and seals itself in. Safe in its earth-cocoon, it pupates-growing into a fat, white, grub-like creature with legs. The pupa is an intermediate form, for soon after it metamorphosizes again, this time into its adult form. At that point it leaves its burrow and rejoins the aquatic environment.

The adult form is sleek and smooth, allowing the creature to glide effortlessly through the water. Its oversized rear legs have paddle-like ends, and it darts through the water quickly by "rowing" its rear legs simultaneously.

Giant diving beetles, as adults, have fully-functioning wings, protected by the hard wing-cases that form its shell. With these, the creature can fly from pond to pond or lake to lake, searching for new food sources or spawning grounds.

Ecology: Adult giant diving beetles are scavengers, attracted to dead and decaying flesh. Although they are solitary, several beetles might join to share in a large food source.

The shells of giant diving beetles, when ground into a fine powder, are often used in the magical inks used to transcribe the spells *water breathing* and *airy water.* Venom glands from the larval form can be used as an alternate material component for *Melf's acid arrow* spells, although the acid produced by the spell never lasts for more than two rounds in such instances.

Sea Cow

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Warm, shallow ocean areas, often along coastal cities
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	Swim6
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Crush
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (10'-12' long)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	65

The term "sea cow", often used interchangeably with either "manatee" or "dugong," is also used to describe a specific magically-enhanced offshoot of the manatee species. These look very much like normal manatees, haveing two front flippers and a single-edged horizontal tail fin. An extremely thick upper lip hangs down over the lower lip, much like a walrus without the tusks. The sea cows's coloration ranges from brown to gray.

Combat: Sea cows aren't very efficient at combat. They are slow-moving, slow-witted creatures with no natural weapons and little combat inclination. They have several blunt teeth, but these are used for chewing aquatic vegetation, not for biting at enemies. The creatures' rather high Morale rating shows not their battle prowess but rather their inability to discern that combat is occurring: many instances have been documented where hunters have waded into a small herd of sea cows and speared one, pulling it up onto shore and gutting it, without discomfiting the other members of the herd in the least.

Once they realize that danger is present, most sea cows simply try to flee to safety. During mating season, though, a male might take offense at anyone coming too close, lunging at the intruder to crush him with its own huge body. Since sea cows are not speedy, crushing damage is limited to 1d6 hp damage.

Habitat/Society: Sea cows in the wild are most often found in the waters along warm coastal areas. They stay close to shore, where the aquatic plants on which they feed are found, and often feed at night when it's safer. Sea cows stick to small family groups, usually a mated pair and their offspring. During mating season, larger groups of sea cows often congregate together. As mammals, sea cows give live birth (a single young is born at a time), and the females produce milk. It is this milk for which the sea cow is prized (see "Ecology," below).

Many coastal cities have begun the practice of farming sea cows, keeping herds of the creatures penned in an area using vast undersea fences and nets. As long as there is plenty of food, the sea cows don't mind the corrals, as the barriers keep out many of the aquatic predators that feed on them.

Ecology: The sea cow is a source of many useful materials, the greatest being its milk. Sea cow milk is perfectly palatable (imbibers claim it tastes somewhat like goat's milk), and has the added benefit of allowing *water breathing* as per the third-level wizard spell. People drinking sea cow milk can breathe either air or water for the duration of the magical effect, which lasts a little less than an hour (1d4+1 turns). For obvious reasons, this milk is highly prized along coastal cities, allowing air-breathing races to hunt, fish, and explore underwater for extended periods of time. Many coastal cities that have trading industries with nearby merman or locathah settlements make use of sea cow farms, so that they may visit these oceanic cities.

The growing use of sea cow milk has angered those wizards who make and sell potions of *water breathing,* for sea cow milk provides all of the benefits of such potions (with only a slight reduction in duration) at a fraction of the cost. On the down side, sea cow milk spoils quickly and loses its magical properties after a day. One scheme growing in practice is the selling of sea *cow* milk as a potion of *water breathing,* charging the full price of a magical potion for something that can be purchased elsewhere much cheaper.

In addition, the sea cow is a good source of meat and blubber. The meat is very tasty, and the blubber is useful in the making of candles and lamp oils.

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Secrets of the Arch-Geomancer

With the arch-geomancer's second defeat, her spell library was pillaged, Since then, several lost volumes on Geomancy have surfaced in the Lands of Fate . . .

by
Paul Fraser

Illustrated by
Steven Schwartz

THE *RUINED KINGDOMS* ADVENTURE FOR THE AL-QADIM® setting introduced a terrifying menace from the Land of Fate's past, the Arch-Geomancer Tisan, Ninth of Nine, Ruler of the Supreme Council, Sunderer of Dreams, She Who Turns the Wheel of Fate. Tisan and her fellow geomancers ruled the ancient empire Kadar, what is today known as the Ruined Kingdoms.

Geomancers combined wizardly and priestly magic in the study of the element of earth. They utilized powerful runes, called geoglyphs, and numerous unique spells. Those interested in the art of geomancy can find it fully detailed in the *Ruined Kingdoms* boxed set.

The cruel geomancers were overthrown by a group of farisan (holy warriors) called the Lions of Yesterday. Tisan, the greatest geomancer of all, was imprisoned in her stronghold Tadabbur.

The Kitab al-Asfr

The woman who would become the arch-geomancer was born centuries ago into Kadar's nobility. Balshareska, as she was called, first trained as a priest of the elemental Cold God Grumbar. She schemed her way into the Imperial College of Geomancy, where she studied wizardly magic. Within 50 years, through a combination of intimidation, coercion and treachery, she attained supreme power in Kadar in the position of Tisan, ruler of the Council of Nine. It was on the eve of being named Tisan that Balshareska compiled the Kitab al-Asfr. In later years, she regarded it as a useful work from her "youth."

The Lions of Yesterday spent their lives destroying all trace of the Geomancers and their learning. During that time, the Kitab was safely imprisoned with Tisan inside Tadabbur. With the Arch-Geomancer's second defeat, her spell library was pillaged. Since then, several lost volumes on Geomancy have surfaced in the Lands of Fate, including the Kitab.

Appearance

This "tome" is actually a single, long scroll written in Kadari on magically preserved papyrus from the Nogaro River. The papyrus is wound around a three-foot-long rod of teak wood from the Grey Jungles. The smooth, varnished rod sticks out of the rolled papyrus sheet at both ends, forming handles. The scroll is tied with two ribbons made from cobra snakeskin.

The scroll rests within a narrow coffer about three and a half feet long and six inches wide. The coffer is constructed of varnished teak wood and lined with scarlet silk. Its exterior is carved with strange symbols.

The top of the coffer, which lifts away, is engraved with a nine-spoked wheel. The wheel's hub is a jet the size of an

apricot. This wheel and hub comprises the asfr, the geomancers' emblem. It symbolizes the relationship between Fate (the outer wheel) and the world (the hub).

The coffer lid is held in place by an ingenious locking mechanism. The wheel's hub must be pressed down and twisted counter clockwise to unlock the lid. Any other attempt to open the coffer, or twisting the gem in the wrong direction, causes a glowing golden geoglyph to appear in the air a few inches above the coffer. Those whose hit points do not exceed 100 and who see the glyph become petrified as the reverse of the wizard spell *stone to flesh.* The glyph, which is cast at 18th level, disappears after one round, but it reappears whenever the lid is meddled with improperly

To lock the coffer, one must replace the lid, press down on the hub, and twist clockwise.

The coffer and scroll rod save as thick wood and receive +4 bonuses. The papyrus scroll saves as paper with a +4 bonus; it is impervious to normal or magical fire.

Contents

Tisan was a dual-classed wizard/priest. She mixed wizard and priest spells indiscriminately in her tome.

The new spells detailed below are considered part of the wizard school of elemental earth and may be used by earth elementalists (see the *Tome of Magic).*

The Kitab al-Asfr contains the following wizard and priest spells (AA indicates a spell from *Arabian Adventures,* ToM indicates a spell from the *Tome of Magic, F&A* indicates a spell from *Faiths & Avatars,* "P" indicates a priest spell, and "*" indicates a new spell described below): *transmute rock to mud* (P), *sandcone (AA), earthenair (F&A)* (P), *fist of stone (ToM), dusting the rock*, stone tell* (P), *earthenport (F&A)* (P), *conjure elemental, stoneskin, stone shape* (P), *sand sword (AA), cone of earth*, stone to flesh, eartkquake* (P), *entombment*, unleash monolith (AA).*

Dusting the Rock

(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 4 rounds + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Special

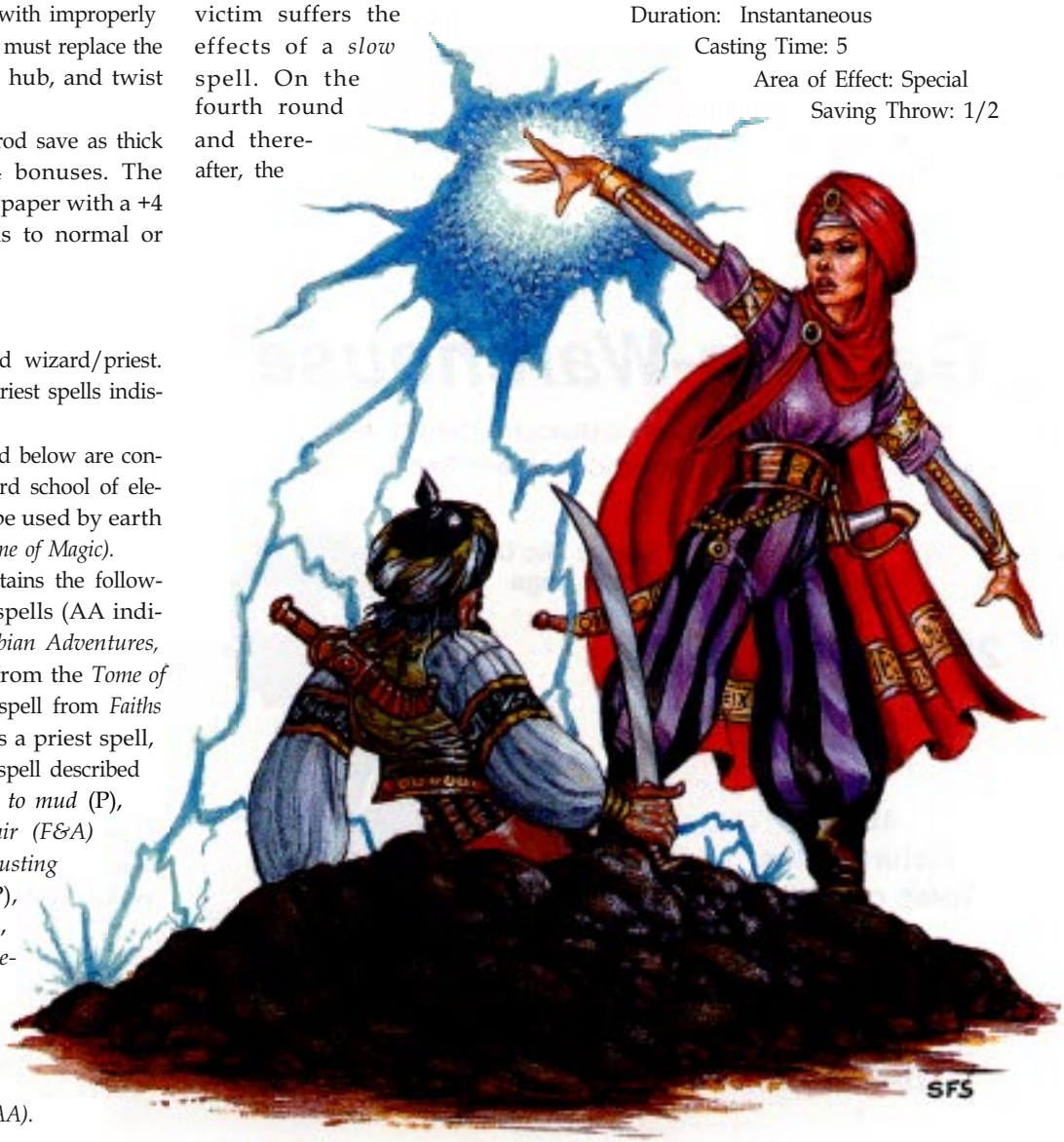
When this spell is cast, the victim acquires a "magnetic" field that attracts dust and any nearby loose earth, sand or gravel. If the victim fails a saving throw, he suffers the full effects of the spell. On the first round, he is covered by a film of dust. In the second round, enough particles accumulate to add a +2 penalty to the victim's armor class and a -2 penalty to his attack rolls. In the third round, the victim suffers the effects of a *slow* spell. On the fourth round and thereafter, the victim is immobilized until a successful *dispel magic* is cast upon him or the accumulated particles are washed away. Three gallons of liquid per size category of the victim (nine gallons for man-sized creatures) can wash the matter away.

If the victim saves, the dust causes him only to sneeze once, ruining any spells he might be casting and otherwise disrupting his concentration.

The material components of this spell are dried quicksand and magnetized iron filings, which are flung at the target..

Cone of Earth

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: 1/2



This spell lets the caster shoot forth from his fingers a cone of earth five feet long and one foot in diameter per level of the caster. The cone inflicts 1d4 + 1 hp damage per level of the caster, to a maximum of 10d4 + 10 hp at 10th level.

Creatures of up to Large size struck by the cone are partially buried and must spend 1-2 rounds digging out. During this time, victims are +3 on their initiative rolls and considered held as by a *hold person* spell or similar effect. (See the combat modifiers section in the *Player's Handbook.)*

Those victims who make a successful saving throw vs. spell suffer half damage and are not buried. Huge and Gargantuan-sized creatures cannot be buried by this spell.

The caster must be standing on earthen ground, not rock or sand, for this spell to function.

The material component of this spell is a small piece of fool's gold.

Entombment

(Alteration)
Reversible
Level: 6
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: One creature or one object of 1 cubic foot/level
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell causes the ground beneath a creature or object designated by the caster to collapse. A victim who fails a saving throw tumbles into the hole so created and is buried alive. The victim cannot move and eventually suffocates unless freed. A victim who makes a successful saving throw vs. spells can leap clear of the hole and is not entombed.

An entombed victim must make a second saving throw to determine whether he managed to get a good gulp of air while falling. If the saving throw succeeds, he can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to one-third his Constitution score, rounded up. (See the rules on "Holding Your Breath" in chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook.)* If the second save fails, the victim was too startled to fill his lungs with air and can hold his breath for only one-sixth his Constitution score, rounded up.

The ground upon which the victim formerly stood is immediately safe to walk upon but has obviously been disturbed, marking the site of the entombment. Regardless of the victim's size, his head is always located ten feet beneath the surface. In the case of entombed objects, the top of the object is always ten feet beneath the surface.

The reverse of this spell, *exhume,* causes the ground to shift, gently raising to the surface any single buried creature (dead or alive) or object designated by the caster. The caster must know that such a creature or object exists for the spell to work, although he need not know its exact nature. For example, the caster may elect to exhume a body buried in a grave plot without knowing its identity or how long it has been interred.

If the creature or object to be exhumed is buried deeper than ten feet, the spell fails.

Entombment has been known to deposit victims in underground caves or chambers that happened to exist 10 feet beneath the surface, unbeknownst to the caster.

This spell should not be confused with the 3rd-level dao spell *entomb,* from the *Secrets of the Lamp* boxed set.

Author Paul Fraser's favorite published campaign world is the Land of Fate. Remember, "We have no fate but the fate which we are given!"

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Magic With Class

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by
Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by
Jim Crabtree

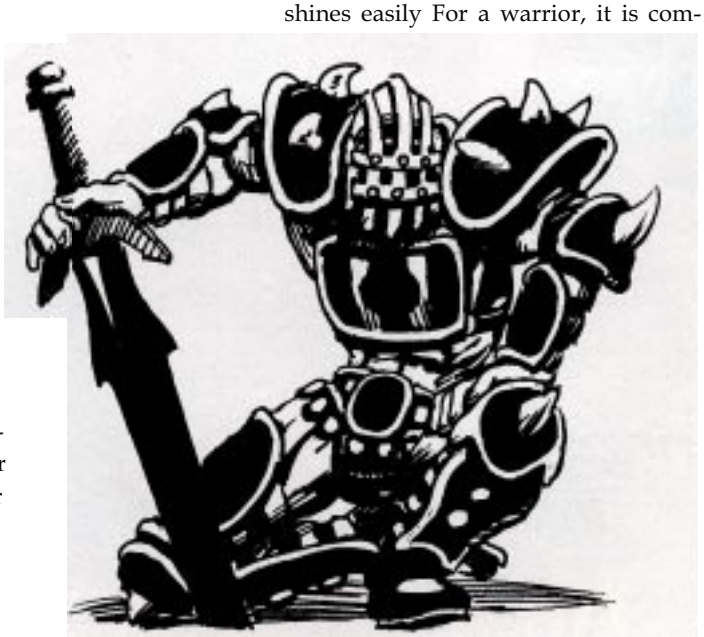
MOST MAGICAL ITEMS ARE EFFECTIVELY "UNIVERSAL," applying the same benefits to any character who picks them up. Many of the items that are restricted to members of a certain class mimic or enhance abilities of that class: thief teMs that add to the thief's chance to hide or sneak, wizard items that cast spells without draining the mage's valuable memorized spell, or items that invoke clerical spells when activated. The warrior's most common items have bonuses to hit enemies harder or more often.

Items that enhance the secondary abilities of a given class are just as useful to characters. These items don't bestow low armor classes or allow the owner to inflict massive amounts of damage with spell or sword. Instead they allow the character some freedom to develop and practice his primary craft without worrying about some of the lesser problems associated with the class. Unless specifically stated, these items provide no magical benefits for character not of the class for which they designed.

Warrior Items

Soldier's Armor

Enchanted by a retired warrior-turned-wizard, this armor appears to be ordinary *plate mail +1* unless worn by a member of the warrior group. The *soldier's armor* is made of a fine steel and shines easily For a warrior, it is com-



pletely immune to rust (normal or magic), its weight is reduced to only 10 lbs., and the wearer is rendered completely immune to bleeding attacks by *swords of wounding* or critical hits. Only human sized suits of this armor have been discovered.

XP Value: 1,200 **GP Value:** 10,000

Knight's Lance

The *knight's lance* is a *heavy horse lance* +2 made of ash and tapering to a wide, flat head. The lance was created by a priestly order with a strong force of paladins and was useful in the fierce wars of their expanding influence. The lance gives the rider a +4 bonus to all riding checks when used and adds +4 to knockdown dice when employed against another mounted opponent, assuming knockdown rules from *PLAYERS OPTION®: Combat & Tactics* is used. If the knockdown rule is not used, a 4-point penalty can be applied to the riding check of another mounted warrior struck by the lance to see whether he remains mounted.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 7,500

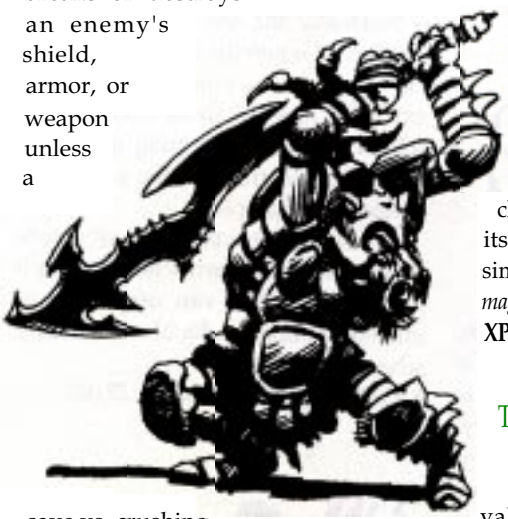
Boots of Marching

A warrior who wears both of these thick leather boots gains +4 on checks vs. fatigue or exhaustion during forced marches and a +2 to all checks to maintain balance when footing is uncertain. Most of these boots (75%) are of small size and break the normal rules for expanding to fit the wearer, fitting only gnomes, halflings, or dwarves. They often have iron soles.

XP Value: 800 **GP Value:** 5,000

Sword of Destruction

The *sword of destruction* is a heavy, doubled-edged long, bastard or two-handed sword. The pommel is usually gold and shaped like the head of a lion. On a called shot, the weapon breaks or destroys an enemy's shield, armor, or weapon unless a save vs. crushing blow is made. The attacker simply declares which item he is attacking in combat, taking the normal penalties for a called shot (4 to attack, +1 initiative penalty). Magical items gain saving throw bonuses as indicated in the Item Saving Throws section of the *DMG*. The *sword of destruction* functions as a +1 weapon at all times.



XP Value: 600 **GP Value:** 6,000

Necklace of Success

One per week, this worthless-looking necklace of crystal and brass allows a warrior who wears it to reroll any single attack, damage, or saving throw. When this ability is called on, the necklace glows briefly after which it bestows a bless spell on the warrior and all allies. within 20 feet for six rounds.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 5,000

Wizard Items

Staff of High Magery

If used as a weapon, this oaken staff is treated as a +1 weapon. It is engraved with runes and glyphs, some of which might very well be magical on their own. The tips are shod with steel bullet-shaped ends, making the staff a fine weapon in melee combat. The name is somewhat ironic, as the staff can only create minor magical effects. At will, the staff can create any *cantrip* effect at no charge cost, call up an *unseen servant* once per day with a duration of three hours, also without using any charges, or provide the holder with total immunity to all 1st-level spells for 1 round per charge. Only one function can be used at any given time. If a new power is invoked, the previous function ceases. When all of the charges are expended, the item loses its additional powers and becomes a simple *quarterstaff +1*. The *staff of high magery* cannot be recharged.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 10,000

Talisman of Power

This talisman is a round medallion on a herringbone necklace of some valuable metal, usually platinum. Inside the circle is an icon that recalls a wizard's tower and common instruments associated with wizards: wand, scroll, and orb.

When worn by a wizard, the user's level is treated as higher than it really is for spell parameters (range, duration, etc.). Damage inflicted is not increased, except possibly as a function of spell duration (magical flames that burn an enemy longer, for example). The caster is not allowed to memorize more spells than normal or cast spells unavailable to a caster of his actual level. The number of levels added is 1 (1-50 on a d%), 2 (51-85), or 3 (86-00).

XP Value: 1,500 per level

GP Value: 10,000 per level

Orb of Protection

The orb of protection is a coral, obsidian, or ivory orb about 4-6" in diameter. It is often chipped or flawed so that it is nearly worthless as a piece of jewelry. The orb's benefits can be adjusted by the owner to provide more protection or reduced for convenience, allowing the wizard to perform other actions.

When a wizard carries this item on his person (and not in an extradimensional space such as a *bug of holding),* all saving throws are made at +1. When the orb is held in one hand, the saving throw bonus increases to +2. If the wizard holds the orb in both hands and makes no attacks or movement, he makes all saves at +4 on the dice.

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 7,500

Robe of the Specialist

When this long, heavy fur robe is worn by a wizard studying his spellbook, the wearer adds one extra spell of each level he can cast to the number that he can normally memorize. These spells must all be of the same school-the school to which the robe is attuned. Spells from the robe's opposition school, however, cannot be learned or cast while it is worn.

Normally, the *robe of the specialist* is only worn when the wizard has a specific purpose in mind and needs an extensive array of spells from a single school. A wizard planning for stealth might benefit from a robe attuned to illusion, for example.

If a specialist wizard wears a robe that enhances his own school, he gains no benefit, but he can use a robe to memorize more spells of a secondary school that he can use.

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 25,000

Ring of Escape

This ring of silver or electrum provides a means of escape from a combat that is going against the wizard. The ring is often adorned with a uniform type of stone, sometimes in one or more parallel bands, sometimes in a wave pattern.

In any round in which the wizard does nothing but flee a combat, the ring doubles his movement rate. The increase in speed does not affect combat, spellcasting, or initiative. If the caster is in hazardous territory or amid obstacles, he can also call upon the jumping non-weapon proficiency as if he had a Strength score of 18.

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 5,000

Priest Items

Vestments of Safety

These holy garments always belong to a particular faith and only work for a priest (cleric or specialty) of that faith. The vestments are made of whatever material is appropriate for the faith and are instantly recognizable by any member of that faith. They provide a simple but very valuable protection: when the priest is protected by a permanent *sanctuary* spell that imposes a an enemy's saving throw to avoid

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 20,000

Symbol of Purity

Like the *vestments of safety,* this holy symbol works only for a priest of the appropriate faith. When the priest presents it in an attempt to turn undead, the attempt is made as if the priest were two levels higher, and the maximum number of undead are always affected. Once per week, the item can invoke a *sunray* spell against the priest's enemies.

XPValue: 2,500 GP Value: 12,500

Divine Armor

The divine armor is a suit of *plate mail* +2 that protects against the touch of the undead and radiates a permanent *protection from evil.* The *protection against undead* uses one of 2d6 charges that the item carries and is identical to the spell.

Divine armor is never made by a priesthood that has no power to turn the undead or does not allow access to the sphere of necromancy. The armor does, however, function for any priest who can wear it.

XP Value: 1,500 GP Value: 7,000

Helm of Holy Might

This simple chain coif provides the priest with the power to resist those who would sway him from his devotion. To this end, it provides the priest with a +2 bonus on saves vs. Enchantment/Charm or Illusion/Phantasm spells. Some thoughtful priest has also rendered it completely *immune* to *heat/chill metal.*

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 5,000

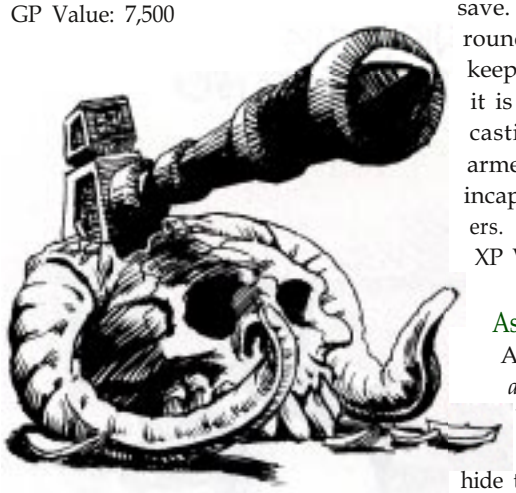
Hammer of Bablas

This silver-headed warhammer was meant to fight against ancient priests of religions now gone or in retreat. The hammer is engraved with golden runes that are mostly eroded by time and use, leaving little clue as to their original message or even style of writing.

Bablas' Hammer in neutral good and has a varying bonus. When used against neutral characters or monsters, it gains a +l bonus on attack and damage rolls, +2 when used vs. evil creatures, and +3 vs. neutral evil creatures. It inflicts double damage when used against an evil priest.

XP Value: 1,250

GP Value: 7,500



Rogue Items

Burglar's Gloves

These items are a great boon to those rogues who search for protected gold. They are decorative gloves of fine material, usually silk or velvet. The wearer's sense of touch is heightened tremendously. He has a 50% chance to find secret compartments less than 1' x 1' by feeling around the area. Traps are also 5% more likely to be detected for the same reason. Should the thief miss a trap, he is protected from venom with a +4 to any saving throws vs. poison.

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 5,000

Silent Blade

This short or broad sword-a fine steel weapon with a +1 enchantment-is made with the needs of a rogue in mind. It is tinted black or deep blue most often. The pommel is bell-shaped, giving the sword the interesting (if useless) ability to stand upright with some reliability. The silent blade makes absolutely no sound when drawn or used. Opponents hit by the blade must save. vs. spells or become mute for 2d6 rounds. The original intention was to keep guards from calling for help, but it is very effective at preventing the casting of spells as well. A rogue armed with a *silent blade* can quickly incapacitate a large group of spellcasters.

XP Value: 1,100 GP Value: 7,000

Assassin's Armor

A suit of black *leather armor* +2, *assassin's armor* is soft to the touch but resists cutting.

Its main benefit is the ability to hide the wearer by giving him the benefit of a *blur* spell at all times, in addition to its normal AC bonus. When wearing the armor, the user can also assume *wraithform* once per day. This last ability is often used to overcome barriers between an assassin and his prey

XP Value: 1,500 GP Value: 6,500

Dust of Blinding

This magical dust commonly appears in a silk pouch, most often a belt pouch that can be carried and removed or torn off quickly. The dust itself appears as a crystalline white powder, with occasional gold specks.

When thrown, the dust transforms into a manifestation of the spell *glitterdust.* It can be thrown up to 10 yards. Occasionally (25% of the time), the dust is extremely potent and functions at 18th level, instead of the customary 12th for most miscellaneous magical items.

XP Value: 500 per pouch

GP Value: 1,500 per pouch

Bard's Spellbook

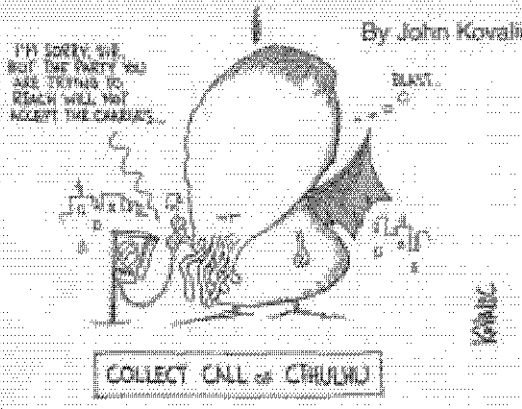
This travelling spellbook is designed with the bard in mind. It has a dark brown leather cover, bound in brass and protected by an iron lock of good quality. The lock is too small to hold a physical trap but might be protected magically. The pages are light and supple, resisting tear and the decay of age. The spellbook holds as many spells as any other travelling spellbook, but its pages can also hold up to 100 pages' worth of songs and tales, magically written so that they appear within the glyphs and symbols used to write the magical spells. Only the bard who writes the tales and songs into the spellbook can normally read them. Others can read the bard's notes with *read magic.*

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 20,000

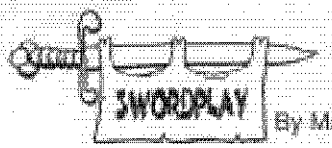
Lloyd is an all-around gamer who likes to play nearly any game, as long as it's D&D. "D&D" is actually a category on his financial record software. Now that he's discovered the internet, you can find him at shikken@aol.com.

Dragon Mirth™

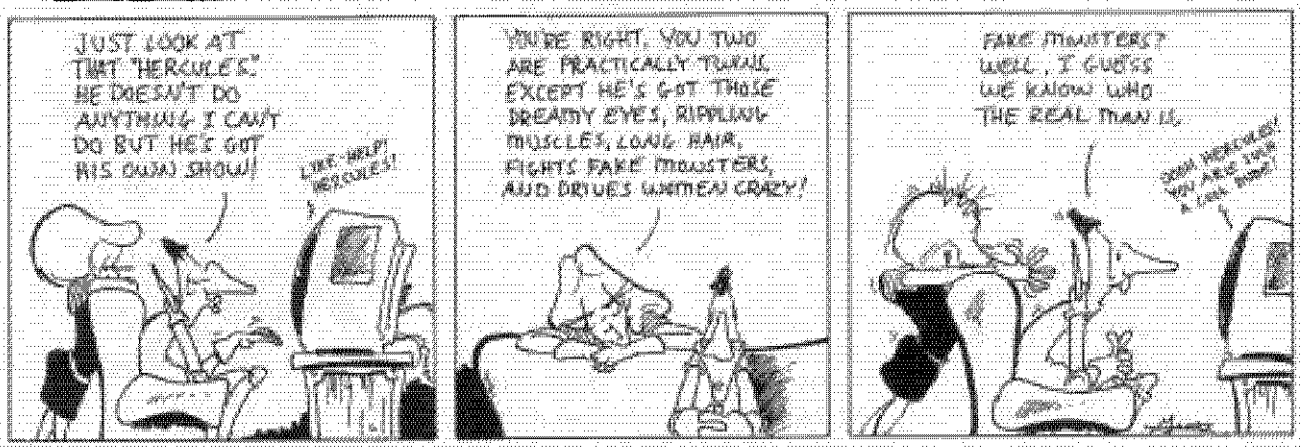
By John Kovalic



COLLECT CALL OF CTHULHU



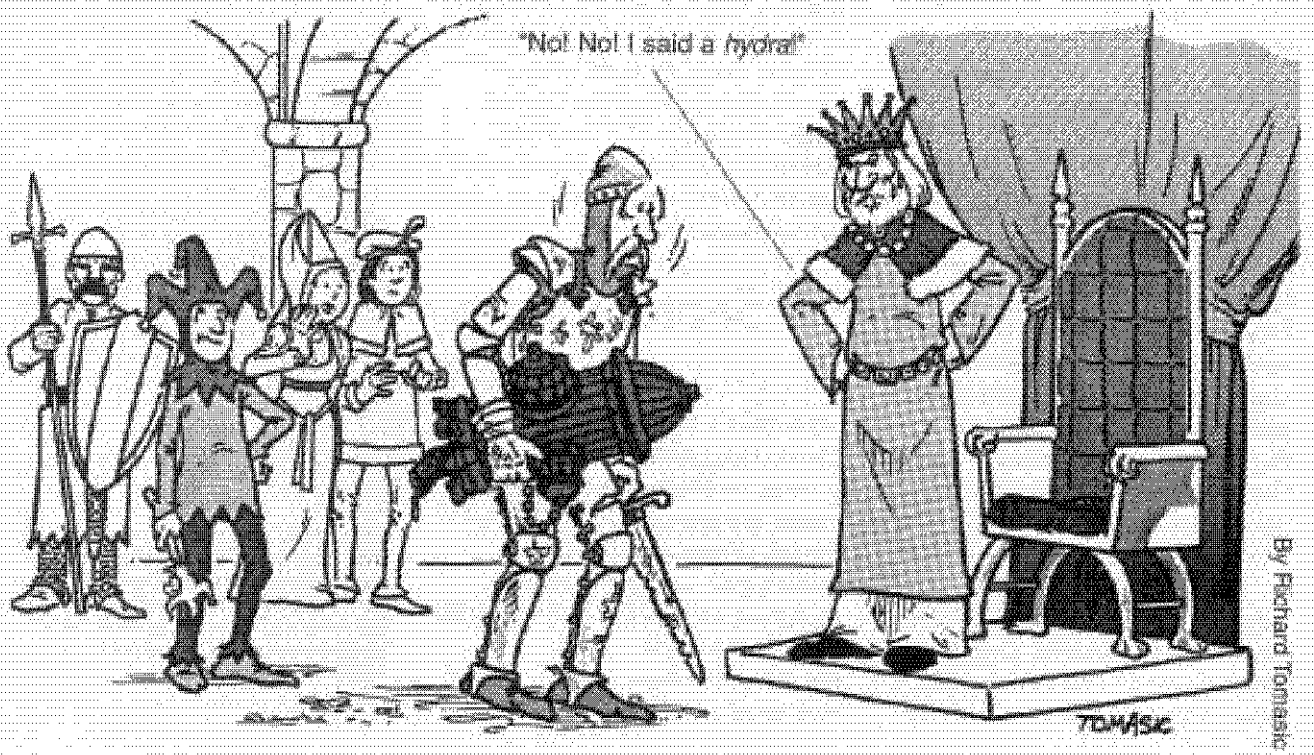
By Mathew Guss


JUST LOOK AT THAT "HERCULES." HE DOESN'T DO ANYTHING I CAN'T DO BUT HE'S GOT HIS OWN SHOW!
LIKE HELP! HERCULES!
YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU TWO ARE PRACTICALLY TWINS. EXCEPT HE'S GOT THOSE DREAMY EYES, RIPPLING MUSCLES, LONG HAIR, FIGHTS FAKE MONSTERS, AND DRIVES WOMEN CRAZY!
FAKE MONSTERS? WELL, I GUESS WE KNOW WHO THE REAL MAN IS.
OOOH, HERCULES! YOU ARE SUCH A MANLY MAN!

By Joe Pillsbury

"WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!... I WANT A RULING ON THIS!... THIS GUY SHOULD NOT STILL BE FIGHTING!... I DON'T CARE IF HE HAS A FEW HIT POINTS LEFT!..."
KOVALIC

By Aaron Williams
RATTLE
RATTLE
LAWFUL
GOOD
THIEF
PLEASE HELP!


"No! No! I said a *hydra!*"
TOMASIC
By Richard Tomasic

Convention Calendar

August

Gen Con Game Fair '98

August 6-9 WI

Milwaukee Convention Center, Milwaukee, WI. Guests: Robert Picardo and John DeLancie, cast members from the original *Lost in Space,* and Bruce Campbell and Alexandra Tydings from *Hercules* and *Xena.* Events: RPGs, TCGs, board games, miniatures, family games, online games, computer games, art gallery, seminars, tournaments, exhibit hall, and more. Contact: Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 13500, Columbus, OH 43213. Email: Andon@aol.com. Web: www.andonunlimited.com.

ComiCon

August 13-16 CA

San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA. Events: comic books, magazines, books, roleplaying, RPGA LIVING CITY, *Virtual Seattle,* MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, RPGA classic tournaments, DRAGON DICE™, trading cards, toys, model kits, film & TV memorabilia, and two floors of meetings, seminars and panel discussions. RPGA contact: Eugene Luster at SirRizzen@aol.com. Convention contact: cciweb@aol.com or www.comic-con.org.

Conlite 15

August 23 W W W

World Wide Web. Events: LIVING CITY Procampur and AD&D. Contact: Jay Fisher, 2690 Drew Street APT 1108, Clearwater, FL 33759. Email: jlorien@concentric.net Web: www.concentric.net/~jlorien/conline/index.html.

Con-Bat '98

Aug. 28-30 TN

Holiday Inn, Clarksville, TN. Events: roleplaying, wargaming, miniatures, historicals, fantasy, and SF boardgaming, dealers' room, and movies. Registration: $10 pre-reg, $12 at the door. Contact: Con-Bat '98, 1364 Ft. Campbell Blvd., Clarksville, TN 37042. Email: WarRoomTN@aol.com

Bubonicon 30

August 28-30 NM

Howard Johnson East, Albuquerque, NM. Guests: Robert J. Sawyer, Jane Lindskold, and David Martin. Events: panels, art show, gaming, GoH speech, autographs, dealers' room, science talk, Saturday dance, auctions, costume contest, filking, and others. Contact: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176. Email: mps@ncgr.org. Web: www.members.aol.com/bubonicon.

September

ConQuest 98

September 4-7 CA

Clarion Hotel, Milbrae, CA. Events: roleplaying, miniatures, live action, board games, computer games, TCGs, flea market, auction, painting contests, dealer's room and more. Contact: ConQuest, 467 Saratoga Ave. Ste. #1422, San Jose, CA 95129.
Email: info@con-quest.com.
Web: www.con-quest.com

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON®* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
❊ Canadian convention
❁ European convention

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CogCon 6

September 25-27 MO

University Center-East, Rolla, MO. Events: *Earthdawn**, AD&D, *CoC*, LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATHS™; also *In Nomine*; GURPS; Champions*; Warhammer Fantasy* Battles and FRP; *Starfleet Battles*; sanc-*tioned *Magic;* and *Star Wars* TCG. Other activities: network computer gaming, charity raffle. Registration: $10 pre-reg, $13 at the door. Reduced fees for partial attendance or TCG-only. Contact: Cog-Con, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402. Email: cogcon@rollanet.org. Web: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon.

October

Archon 22

Oct. 24 MO

Gateway Convention Center and Holi-day Inn, Collinsville, IL. Guests: James P. Hogan, John Sies, Lester Smith, Ricky Dick, and Karen Dick. Events: writers' workshops, panels, presentations, videos, grand masquerade show, art show, and gaming. Gaming events include: RPGA sanctioned roleplaying, miniatures, boardgames, and trading card games. Registration: $25 until 8/31, $30 afterward. Contact: Archon 22, P.O. Box 8387, St. Louis, MO 63132-8387. Web: www.stlf.org/archon/index.html

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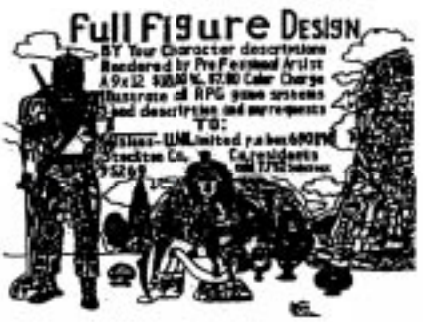

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Starship Design Contest

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You don't have to know anything about the new ALTERNITY® *Science Fiction Roleplaying Game to enter or win! We don't want game rules or "balanced construction"—in fact, you can win this contest in one of three ways:*

- **Draw your starship.** *Let it stand on its own, silent in space. Send us a drawing of your best-looking original creation. Give us the outer hull, deck-plans, or whatever you feel makes it awesome.*
- **Describe your starship.** *Write a vivid description of your dream-ship, along with the technical specifications as detailed in Chapter 11 of the* ALTERNITY *Gamemaster Guide. All entries must be typed and should not exceed* **500 words in length.** *Tell us all about it—its capabilities, its history, its legacy, and whatever else you think makes it distinct.*
- **Do both!** *If you can write and draw, we want to read about your starship and see it, too!*

All entries must be received by **September 21, 1998.** *All judges' decisions are final. If you submit a drawing, please do so on unlined paper so that we might reproduce the winners here.*

The first-place winner will receive a copy of the STAR*DRIVE™ *Campaign Setting, the* ALIEN COMPENDIUM™*: Creatures of the Verge* STAR*DRIVE *accessory, and an official* STAR*DRIVE *T-shirt! Three runners-up will each receive a copy of the* ALIEN COMPENDIUM*: Creatures of the Verge accessory.*

DRAGON® Magazine

"Starship Design" Contest Rules

1. *Entry:* To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Starship Design or Description ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") DRAGON Magazine Starship Design Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 800 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), September 21, 1998. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. *Originality of Entry:* All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. *Use and Ownership of Entry Info:* In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights as entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. *Prizes:* The first-place winner of the Starship Design contest shall receive a free copy of the Star*Drive™ Campaign Setting (approximate value $29.95), the *Alien Compendium™: Creatures of the Verge* Star*Drive accessory (approximate value $21.95), and a Star*Drive T-shirt (approximate value $20). Three runners-up will each receive a free copy of the *Alien Compendium: Creatures of the Verge* accessory (approximate value $21.95).

5. *Eligibility:* Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 7 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for late, illegible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. *Restrictions:* Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Dragon Magazine Starship Design Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners' lists must be received by October 30, 1998. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

"Starship Design" Contest

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

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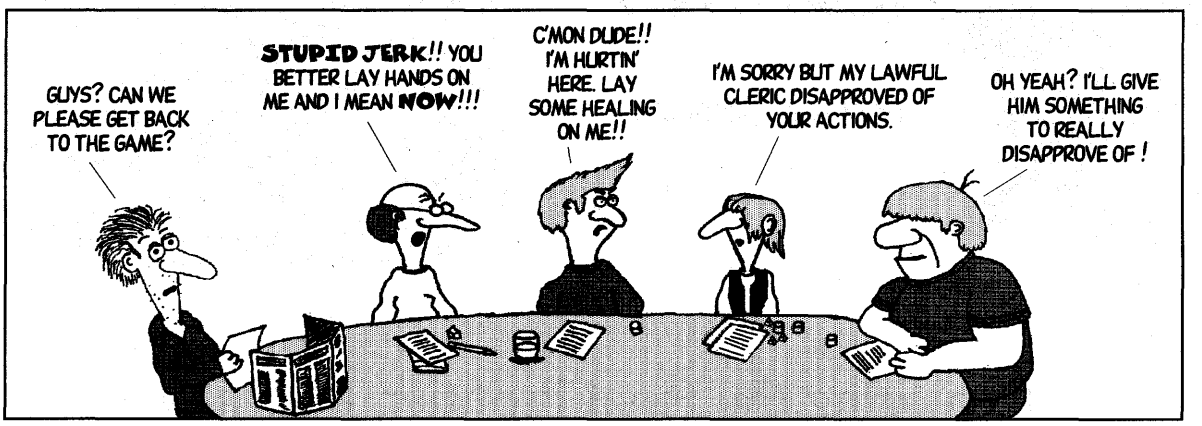
GUYS? CAN WE PLEASE GET BACK TO THE GAME?
STUPID JERK!! YOU BETTER LAY HANDS ON ME AND I MEAN NOW!!!
C'MON DUDE!! I'M HURTIN' HERE. LAY SOME HEALING ON ME!!
I'M SORRY BUT MY LAWFUL CLERIC DISAPPROVED OF YOUR ACTIONS.
OH YEAH? I'LL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO REALLY DISAPPROVE OF !

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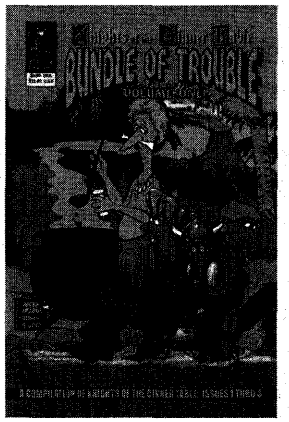

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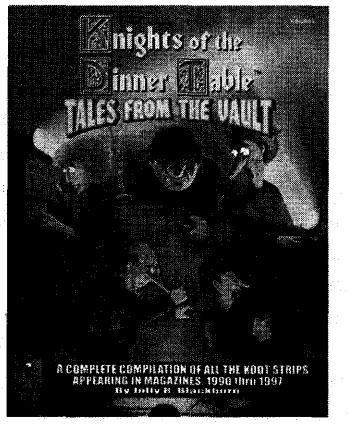
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Exploring the Final Frontier, PART ONE

Given the prominence and popularity of the genre, it's surprising that no one has ever produced a definitive science fiction roleplaying game. The game that would like to claim the title, *Traveller** (first published by the now-defunct GDW in the late 70s), enjoyed brief spurts of popularity but never really established its continuing relevance. Ultimately, *Traveller's* fate was sealed by a couple of aborted attempts to rebuild the entire game *(Traveller 2300 AD** and *Traveller the New Era**) and the somewhat disappointing performance of a recent attempt to revive the "old-fashioned" version.

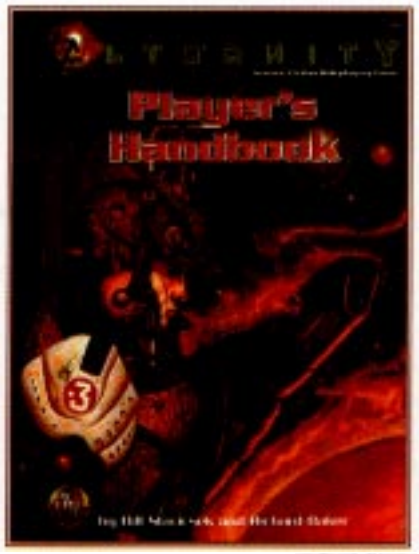
Traveller is an excellent illustration of a couple of reasons why it's so difficult to make gameable science fiction "stick." One of the first lessons learned by fledgling AD&D® Dungeon Masters is just how daunting large-scale maps can be. The minute you plop the GREYHAWK® campaign in front of players, they want to explore, visit strange nations with intriguing names, and tour the countryside. The DM must be ready to run adventures set in thousands of possible locales across an entire continent against dozens of possible cultural backdrops. Fortunately, the typical fantasy world has a number of built-in limitations that ease this concern. In an AD&D world, it's perfectly plausible for the player characters to begin play with no idea what lies more than a few miles away from their homes, giving the DM an opportunity to run several acclimating adventures before revealing detailed maps of continents and opening up lots of opportunities to the players. Once those large-scale maps are revealed, a cross-continental journey itself is likely to occupy several game sessions, giving the DM plenty of time to prepare for the destination of the players' choice. After all, fantasy characters usually travel only as fast as the swiftest steed.

Think about how these same problems might plague a science fiction GM. *In* many ways, the *Traveller* equivalent of AD&D's GREYHAWK was a section of space known as the Spinward Marches. Like GREYHAWK, the Marches was a particularly interesting piece of a larger setting that was mapped out in its own game supplement. But while GREYHAWK illustrated and briefly described dozens of nations across an entire continent, the Spinward Marches depicted hundreds of complete worlds spread across a vast space sector. Unlike AD&D adventurers moving between nations, *Traveller* characters could often jump between entire worlds at warp speed with little chance of encounters along the way. While each nation of GREYHAWK received at least a couple of paragraphs of description, there were so many worlds in the Marches that each was reduced to no more than a handful of raw statistics. Imagine describing a world as complex and interesting as Frank Herbert's Arrakis, Tolkien's Middle-earth, or *Star Treks* Klingon homeworld in just five or six numbers. Obviously, a good *Traveller* GM must be extremely fast on his feet, capable of inventing entire worlds and cultures from scratch at a moment's notice. Unfortunately, only the most elite GMs are consistently capable of such a feat.

Another important difference between science fiction and fantasy gaming is that, unlike fantasy, science fiction is extremely active in the popular culture. Every year sees the release of a new blockbuster science fiction film or television series, and each of these releases changes gamers' expectations about what science fiction should be. In the 20 years since *Traveller* was released, the "cyberpunk" school of science fiction literature has combined with dozens of films and a handful of popular television series to create a new set of staples and genre conventions that Traveller simply wasn't designed to handle. AD&D's turf, on the other hand, has been relatively untrammeled by definitive new influences across an even longer span.

Although these obstacles are relatively significant, so are the potential rewards for anyone who manages to overcome them. Science fiction is staggeringly popular—even more popular than fantasy A definitive science fiction RPG could potentially elevate all but the largest game publishers to a whole new level in the same way that a handful of definitive horror games elevated White Wolf.

Recently, a number of talented game designers tried their hands at science fiction roleplaying games. Let's see how they fared.



ALTERNITY®
Player's Handbook

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game
256-page full-color hardback
TSR $29.95
Design: Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker
Development: Kim Mohan
Illustrations: rk post, Todd Lockwood, William O'Connor, Dennis Kauth, Rob Lazzaretti
Cover: rk post

Of all the new science fiction games, TSR's ALTERNITY game is probably the most ambitious. ALTERNITY aspires to nothing less than establishing the same sort of presence in the science fiction genre that AD&D has captured in the fantasy genre. In many important respects, TSR has re-examined their earlier blockbuster and attempted to apply its lessons to the structure of ALTERNITY and, to a lesser extent, to its mechanics. Consequently, like the core AD&D rulebooks, ALTERNITY itself does not come bundled with any particular game setting. The GM is encouraged to either create his own campaign or wait for one of the several settings, known as "alternate tomorrows," that TSR will release in the months ahead. (The first, the STAR*DRIVE™ campaign, is available now.) Similarly, the ALTERNITY rules are spread across two books, a *Player's Handbook* and a *Gamemaster Guide.* Later, various ALIEN COMPENDIUM™ supplements are scheduled to fill the role of the AD&D MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® books.

The Player's Handbook opens with a useful and promising summary that manages to boil down all the game's mechanical concepts to a mere five pages. Later, each concept is described in greater detail, as the rules add various options and complications. Although it's doubtful that too many players will act upon the suggestion presented in the rules and try to play an entire adventure after absorbing just the five page summary, the fact that all the game's most important concepts can be summarized in just a few pages bodes well for its playability.

Overall, the ALTERNITY rules are slightly more complex than the AD&D rules and seem strongly slanted toward a brash, "intergalactic swashbuckling" style of play. Characters are built using a point-allocation system and have essentially the same six ability scores as their AD&D counterparts-Wisdom is renamed Will, and Charisma is renamed Personality. During the character creation process, each player selects a Profession (essentially the same thing as AD&D classes) and a Career (which functions much as the kits introduced in the various AD&D Complete Handbooks). The available Professions are: Combat Specialist (fighter), Diplomat (a character who relies on wisdom and interaction skills; an ALTERNITY version of an AD&D cleric), Free Agent (a rogue or troubleshooter who relies on agility; an AD&D thief), and Tech Operative (a genius who can create and control high-tech equipment; essentially an AD&D wizard). A fifth Profession, Mindwalker, is a psionic specialist available only in appropriate campaigns. Each Profession has a number of associated Careers. Combat Specialists, for instance, might select Bodyguard, Law Enforcement Officer, Mercenary, or any one of several other available archetypes. Careers have no mechanical impact on play but serve merely to suggest appropriate skills and to help a player solidify his character's role and personality

The bulk of each character's abilities are defined by a set of skills. Although each Profession has an associated special ability shared by all its members (Diplomats, for instance, begin with a special friend-in-high-places), Professions do not place limits on the skills available to any particular character. Unlike the AD&D game, ALTERNITY allows its characters to develop any abilities they desire, though skills associated with their chosen Profession are generally cheaper and easier to acquire. Later, as a character improves in experience level, he or she can improve skills and purchase various other benefits. Rounding out a character's abilities are Perks and Flaws—special abilities and drawbacks such as "Danger Sense" that allows a character to anticipate trouble, and "Forgetful" that makes it difficult for the character to remember details. While the Professions and Careers are solidly designed, too many of the Perks and Flaws seem to be present only to flesh out a list. Why purchase a "Slow" flaw to indicate that a character has a poor reaction time? Why not just assign the character a lower Dexterity? In all, the Perks and Flaws add relatively little to the character creation system. Fortunately, they're all optional purchases, so the GM can easily dispense with most of them if he or she so desires.

Like AD&D, ALTERNITY also gives players the option to create non-human characters. The AD&D dwarves, elves, and so forth have been replaced by five alien races capable of generating suitable player characters. Fraal are spindly gray humanoids with large black eyes (like the beings that pop up in every sixth episode of *The X-Files);* they're wise psionic specialists who are peace-loving and creative. Mechalus are part living creature and part machine (much like *Star Trek's* Borg); though capable of feeling emotions, they value logic above all else. Sesheyans are flying reptilian humanoids who dwell in the dark and originate from a relatively primitive homeworld. T'sa are agile lizard men with an affinity for engineering. Weren are hulking, lion-like warriors with a strong sense of honor and discipline. Each race has minimum and maximum ability score limits, as well as associated special abilities and penalties. T'sa, for instance, have a natural scaly body armor, receive a bonus when jury-rigging machinery, and get an "Action Check Bonus" that makes it more likely they'll act first in a combat round.

ALTERNITY resolves all Skill and Ability checks using the same general system. A character attempting an action rolls both a Control Die and a Situation Die. The Control Die is always a d20; the Situation Die depends upon the difficulty of the attempted action and any complicating circumstances. Situation Dice run along a scale of d0, d4, d6, d8, d12, d20, 2d20,3d20, etc. and can be either positive (for tasks that are difficult to accomplish) or negative (for tasks that are easy). Jumping over a fence while someone is shooting at you, for instance, is fairly difficult and might have a Situation Die of +d6. Jumping over the fence while people are shooting and you and you are wounded is even harder, and it might have a Situation Die of +d12. On the other hand, jumping over a particularly low fence is easy, and might have a Situation Die of -d4.

To resolve an action, the character rolls the Control Die (d20) and adds the roll of the situation die (or subtracts it, if the die is negative). If the total is less than or equal to his or her relevant Ability or Skill score, the action succeeds. Degree of success is measured by the relative difference between the Ability or Skill and the total roll; rolling less than half your target is a "Good" success, rolling less than a quarter of the target is an "Amazing success" and any other positive result is simply an "Ordinary" success. Although the idea of using a second die in place of the positive and negative situational modifiers employed by most other game systems is unusual, it's very well thought out. Its net effect is to inject more excitement into play by giving players a chance to accomplish nearly impossible tasks (even a character with an Ability score of 7 can succeed when the Situation Die is 3d20 if he makes an extremely lucky roll). This mechanic combined with a capacity to improve dice rolls by spending "Last Resort Points" is what gives ALTERNITY its "high adventure" swashbuckling flavor.

Combat in ALTERNITY is fairly standard with a few interesting exceptions. Each character tracks three types of damage (essentially three different sets of Hit Points): Stun, Wound, and Mortal. When all your Stun or Wound points are used up, you're unconscious; when your Mortal points are used up, you're dead. Each of the three types of damage heal at different rates, and the type of damage inflicted depends upon the weapon used and the success level rolled. Similarly, all damage is classified as Low Impact, High Impact, or Energy to help adjudicate the usefulness of various types of armor. While all of this sounds complicated and certainly causes a bit of a headache for a GM forced to conduct a large battle, intelligently designed character sheets make the system much easier to adjudicate. In the end, all of this detail is what allows ALTERNITY to convincingly model everything from stone axes to maser cannons, a must for any science fiction game that hopes to provide GMs with the flexibility to create their own settings.

Although the idea of using a second die . . . is unusual, it's very well thought out. Its net effect is to inject more excitement into play by giving players a chance to accomplish nearly impossible tasks

Pleasantly comprehensive, the *Player's Handbook* also includes rules for vehicles and vehicle combat, mutants, psionics, computers, and cybernetic implants. Also included are lengthy and fairly complete tables of weaponry, vehicles, and equipment available from civilizations ranging in advancement from the Stone Age to an extremely advanced "Energy Age." None of these support systems was added as an afterthought; each is fully developed and detailed.

Evaluation: The ALTERNITY mechanics are elegant, comprehensive, and functional, More importantly, they're a lot of fun-their flexibility gives players and GMs lots of options, and the game's tone of "high adventure" is extremely well-suited to roleplaying.

The game's flaws are more a byproduct of the concept than the execution. By and large, the various trappings of AD&D-the character races, the magic items, the spells, etc.-were derived from cross-cultural archetypes that are almost as old as recorded human history. It's precisely this fact makes these trappings so easy to adopt to a wide variety of settings and cultural backdrops. ALTERNITY tries to replace all these cultural icons with creations of its own: T'sa, maser rifles, and photon sails, for instance. So much of what distinguishes one science fiction setting from another is usually expressed in precisely these details; science fiction doesn't share as well-defined a set of archetypes and genre conventions as fantasy. While it's easy to imagine some form of dwarves in fantasy worlds based upon European, Oriental, or Amerindian myths and legends, it's much harder to imagine T'sa in *Blade Runner, 2001: A Space Odyssey,* and *Terminator.* Similarly, a detail like the mechanics of interstellar space travel can have a vast impact on setting. Compare the ways in which *Dune, Star Wars, Star Trek,* and *Alien* all approach this topic. The generic assumptions that ALTERNITY makes about space travel layered over all these settings would almost certainly rob one or more of them of an unacceptable amount of their unique flavor. Of course, the GM has the option of replacing any of the ALTERNITY systems or creations with new systems and creations more appropriate to the game world, but there's a good chance that any effort to create a setting that strays too far from home will require so much tinkering that the poor GM might as well design his own game. This isn't to say that a generic science fiction game is impossible to design, merely that attempting to mirror the AD&D approaches is probably not the best way to go about it.

In any case, none of this makes the ALTERNITY game a bad game. What it does, it does very well indeed, and it certainly puts a lot of toys in the hands of players and GMs who like to tinker and invent their own concepts. Even if the whole is far less flexible than AD&D, it's still one of the most well-imagined and interesting science fiction efforts in several years.

Blue Planet

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game
348-page B&W paperback
Biohazard Games $27.95
Created by: Jeffrey Barber
Developed and Written by: Jeffrey Barber, Greg Benage, John Snead, and Jason Werner
Additional Material: James Givens, Allan Grohe, John Harper, John Hay, James Heivilin, Harold Martin, and Charles Lewis
Illustrations: Jeffrey Barber, Christopher Benedict, Blair Reynolds, Matti Williams
Cover: Jeffrey Barber

Blue Planet employs a rather effective solution to the GREYHAWK/Spinward Marches problem. Although the game is concerned with exploring the deepest regions of outer space, its setting was designed to revolve around a single planet, upon which the designers have lavished enough detail to prepare the GM for almost anything the players might imagine. *Blue Planet's* backstory goes something like this: in 2078, Earth astronomers located a "wormhole" at the outer edge of the solar system. A probe dispatched through the wormhole revealed a pristine planet with a breathable atmosphere on the other side. Since the Earth's resources were starting to give out at about this time, a group of intrepid adventurers were sent to colonize the new world in search of a better life. Unfortunately, the United Nations (now acting as a sort of planetary government) ran out of resources altogether shortly after the colonists left and never returned with additional supplies. Almost 200 years later, after the situation on Earth continued to deteriorate past the breaking point, the Global Ecology Organization (the UN's successor as planetary government) made a second effort to colonize the planet on the far side of the wormhole. Much to the surprise of the second batch of colonists, many descendants of the first batch had somehow survived and given rise to their own rough-and-tumble culture. As the game opens, the GEO, the new colonists, a group of corporations looking to exploit the new planet's resources, a handful of docile "aborigine" aliens native to the new world, and the descendants of the original colonists must all learn to cooperate to build a new life on the distant world.

The most interesting aspect of Poseidon, *Blue Planet's* setting, is that it is almost entirely covered with water-the planet's only land masses are a few scattered archipelagos. This opens the door to a number of fascinating undersea adventures that should provide quite a change of pace from the usual science fiction fare. In addition to the various human colonists and its own native species, Poseidon is also populated by a wide variety of exotic (and sometimes deadly) marine life, as well as intelligent dolphins and killer whales transported from Earth to assist the various waves of human visitors. Another key feature is a series of grand mysteries permeating the whole setting: what is the true nature of the wormhole? what lies at the bottom of Poseidon's deepest oceans? how did that first wave of colonists survive? and what are the hidden truths known only to Poseidon's native species? All told, it's easy to imagine a *well-run Blue Planet* campaign coming off as a sort of undersea version of *2001: A Space Odyssey* combined with a high-tech take on Kevin Costner's *Waterworld.*

In addition to exploring Poseidon's oceans, there's plenty of political intrigue. Each of the factions residing on Poseidon has well-developed goals and interests which inevitably clash with the goals and interests of their neighbors. The corporations are trying to get as many resources off-planet as possible and clashing with each other for the best mining opportunities. The GEO is trying to rein-in the corporations to protect the colonists and their way of life. Many of the original colonists fear that the corporations will destroy Poseidon's environment just as they blighted the Earth, but these same colonists have no love for the GEO due to the fact that the Earth government abandoned their ancestors. Then there are the enigmatic natives who clearly have a mysterious agenda of their own.

One of the most impressive features of *Blue Planet* is the incredible lengths to which the designers have gone to describe Poseidon and the game setting. Approximately 250 of the book's 348 pages are devoted to background and exposition. Since these pages feature fewer illustrations than you'd find in a similar span in the typical RPG product, they're bursting with detail. Everything from Poseidon's solar system to the hazards of deep sea diving receives its own section in the rulebook, and the various cultures present on the planet are described in almost encyclopedic depth. So little is left unaddressed, and most of the essays are so thorough, that *Blue Planet* is clearly identifiable as a labor of love for its designers, a trait shared by most of the very best RPGs. Although absorbing the game's complex background is a difficult and sometimes tedious process, most GMs will greatly appreciate *Blue Planet's* completeness; the average RPG forces you to buy three or four separate sourcebooks to get this much background material.

Conspicuously absent among all the background material is solid advice on how to create and run adventures. Although *Blue Planet* was clearly designed for experienced players and all but abandons novices, it would have been nice to get some of the designers' thoughts on how to use all that comprehensive background information as a backdrop for satisfying stories. Such a section would also make it easier for GMs trying to absorb the *Blue Planet* setting to focus their attention on the most important information, allowing them to get their campaigns up and running faster and easier. Still, some GMs will

probably appreciate the fact that *Blue Planet* doesn't try to steer them toward any particular type of adventure.

To compensate for all the attention devoted to the background, the game's rules are given predictably short shrift, occupying just 80 pages, most of which are dedicated to skill and profession descriptions. Interestingly enough, in many ways *Blue Planet* bucks the trend toward simpler, more streamlined game systems that has dominated the industry's conventional wisdom since the release of *Vampire** in 1991. Characters have 14 separate attributes: Awareness, Charisma, Education, Experience, Initiative, Intellect, Will, Agility, Appearance, Constitution, Dexterity, Endurance, Speed, and Strength. In addition to plain vanilla humans, *Blue Planet* characters can be biogenetically or cybernetically-altered humans, as well as intelligent dolphins and killer whales that can converse with humans using mechanical devices. Character generation is accomplished through a complex point allocation scheme that takes into consideration species, genetic predisposition, origin, background, education, and profession. Ultimately, most attributes and skills are measured on a simple 1-100 scale; tasks are resolved by rolling percentile dice under the appropriate value. Because some of Poseidon's inhabitants are either far superior or far inferior to humans in various arenas, the rules actually employ several cascading 1-100 scales of varying degrees of potency. Dolphins, for instance, have an endurance that's measured on a scale seven entire 1-100 scales higher than that of humans. While attribute and skill checks that are off the human scale are still resolved with a percentile roll, the ultimate results of those checks take scale into account to produce either more or less significant results.

Combat *in Blue Planet* is unexpectedly complex, employing a phased action system *à la Champions.* Combatants roll Initiative only once per battle to determine how many phases pass before they may take their first actions. Thereafter, each character is allowed to act every time a number of phases passes based upon his or her Speed attribute. Damage is heavily dependent upon hit location; *Blue Planet* employs a variant of the age-old "critical hit table" and produces results that read like this: "Massive injury to throat, arterial spray, ruined trachea, panicked suffocation; 100% chance of artery severed, trauma -2 levels; 55% chance of unconsciousness; totally incapacitated." All of this tends to make combat exceptionally deadly The price the rules pay for resolving each attack in extraordinary detail (maybe too much detail) is a slower-than-average pace and a bit too much bookkeeping for some GMs.

Blue Planet's setting is one of the most creative and unusual in recent memory.

Evaluation: *Blue Planet's* setting is one of the most creative and unusual in recent memory. The rulebook houses enough detailed material to keep an enterprising GM going for months. The rules, however, are a bit too complex and scant for the tastes of many players. In *any* case, at $27.95, *Blue Planet* is a terrific value. Anyone interested in exploring a model of a well-developed and intriguing campaign setting is urged to take a look. If the rules aren't to your liking, it won't prove too difficult to convert it to your favorite system; in fact, *Blue Planet* would probably work well with the ALTERNITY game.

Short and Sweet

Trinity Technology Manual,* designed by William S. Bruckman, Jon Carroll, Adam Gratun, Conrad Hubbard, Evan Jamieson, Judith A. McLaughlin, Richard Meyer, John R. Snead, Richard Tomasso, and Fred Yelk (White Wolf, $15.95).

The Technology Manual is a fascinating look at the weaponry, electronic devices, and spaceships that populate White Wolf's Trinity game setting. While most gadgetry catalogs are useful but not very exciting to read, the *Technology Manual* includes 40 full-color pages of interesting essays explaining the various impacts of technology upon *Trinity's* futuristic society. As a consequence, it's more than a compendium of guns and gear, it's also a conventional sourcebook containing enough seeds to inspire dozens of adventures.

Trinity Darkness Revealed 1: Descent into Darkness, designed by Bruce Baugh and Richard Dansky (White Wolf, $15.95)

Descent into Darkness contains the first published mini-campaign for *Trinity* and is the first volume in a trilogy that promises to draw the player characters into a series of events that will help reshape *Trinity's* 22nd century. *Descent* contains three separate (but linked) adventures, each well-developed and extremely well-illustrated. *Descent's* designers wisely included something to please just about every type of player: mysteries to unravel, puzzles to solve, great roleplaying encounters, and epic battles to win.

GURPS: Russia,* by S. John Ross (Steve Jackson Games, $19.95). Although its subject matter is a bit esoteric (yet fascinating), this is quite a bit better than the average *GURPS* historical sourcebook. GMs will appreciate its thorough and comprehensive coverage of the magic, myths and legends of medieval and tsarist Russia. Cutting some of the drier historical material in favor of a longer chapter on designing and running Russian campaigns would have made for a much better book, but *GURPS: Russia* still boasts plenty of useful tidbits between its cover. Like most *GURPS* sourcebooks, Russia is light enough on mechanics to prove useful to GMs using just about any game system.

Ray Winninger has been a professional game designer for 15 years. He's worked with a number of publishers, including TSR, FASA, White Wolf) West End Games, Mayfair Games, and Pagan Publishing. These days, he writes screenplays and stories, produces multimedia and plots "Internet strategy" for a Fortune 500 corporation.

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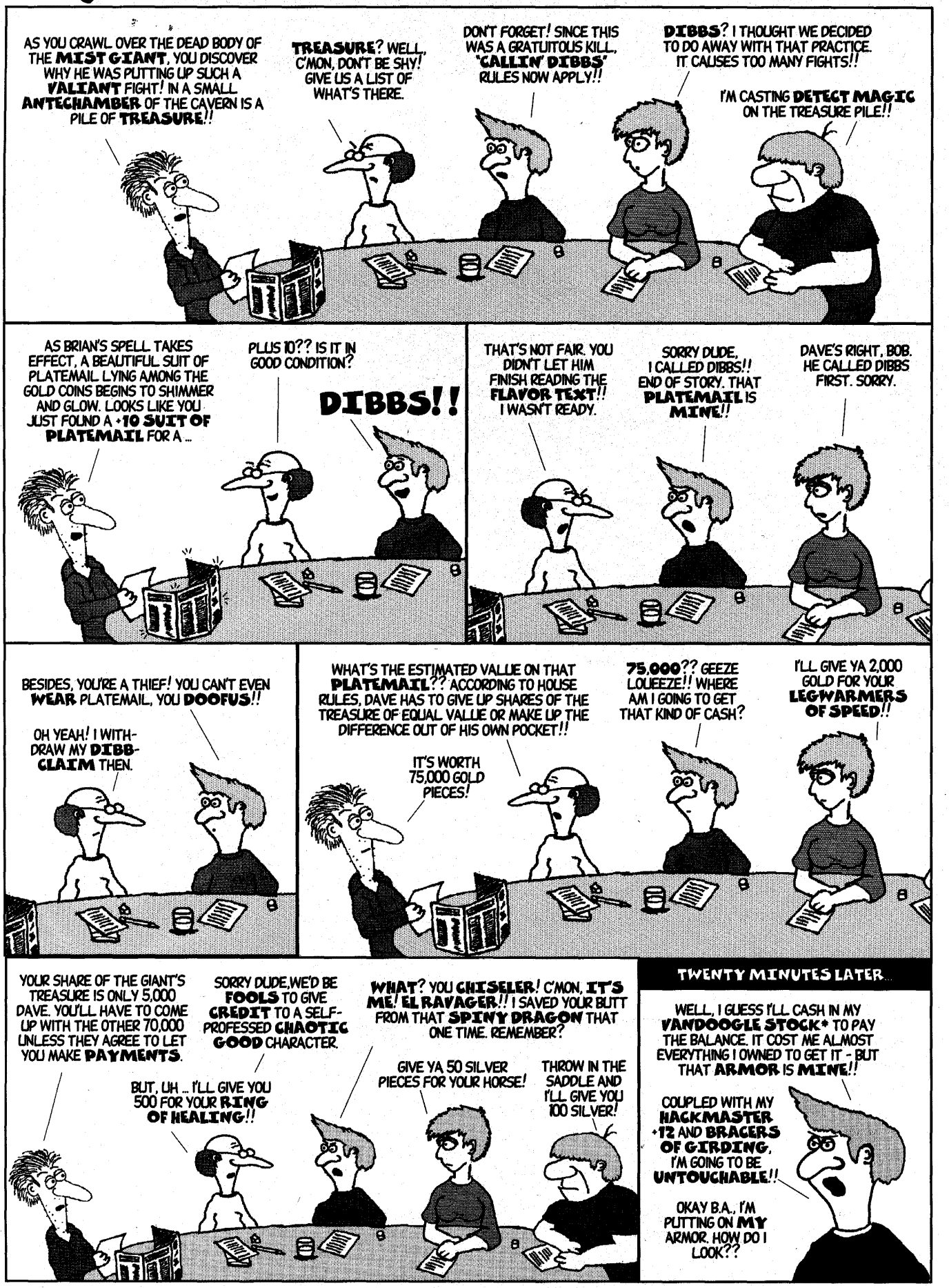
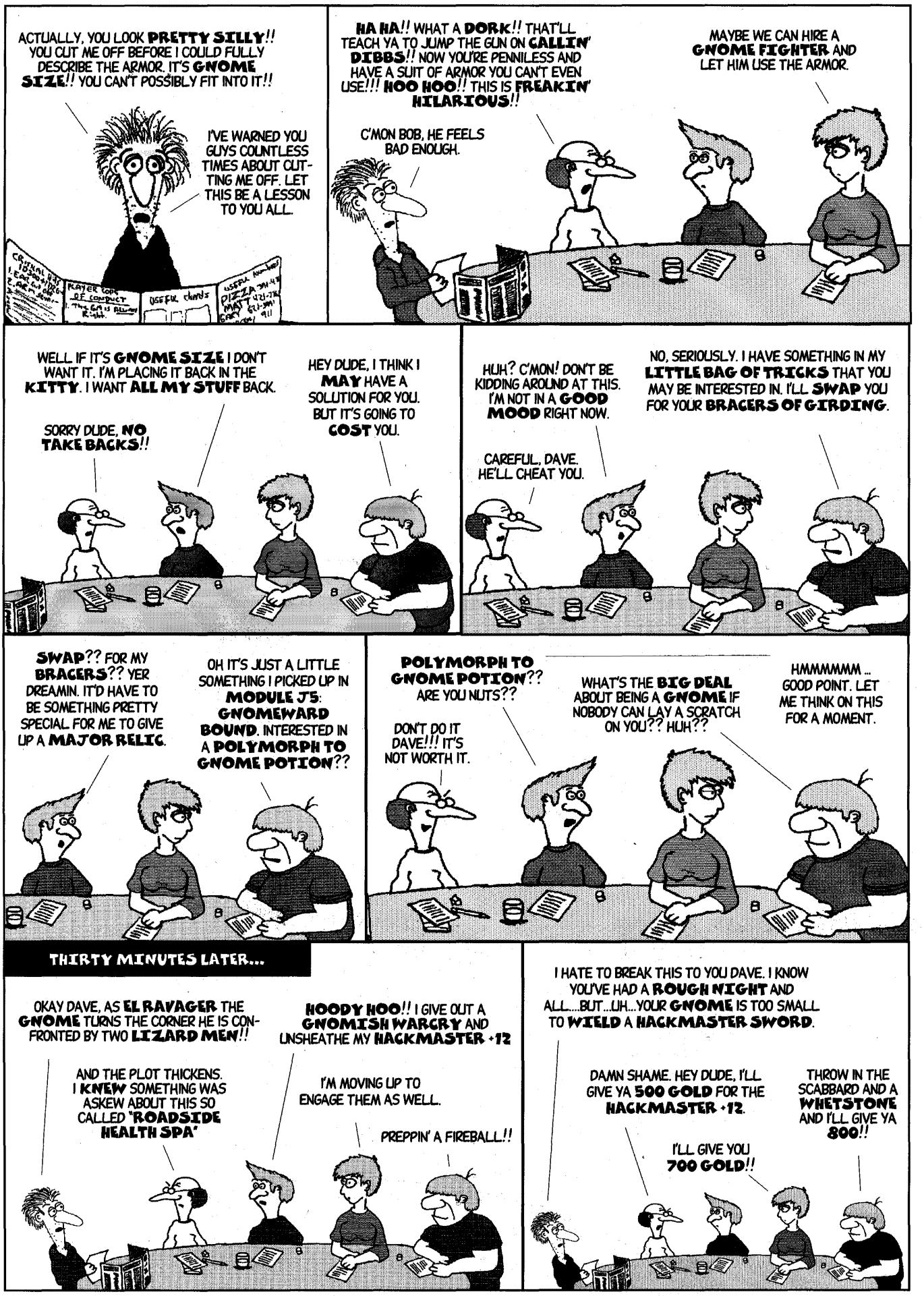
Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


AS YOU CRAWL OVER THE DEAD BODY OF THE MIST GIANT, YOU DISCOVER WHY HE WAS PUTTING UP SUCH A VALIANT FIGHT! IN A SMALL ANTECHAMBER OF THE CAVERN IS A PILE OF TREASURE!!
TREASURE? WELL, C'MON, DON'T BE SHY! GIVE US A LIST OF WHAT'S THERE.
DON'T FORGET! SINCE THIS WAS A GRATUITOUS KILL, "CALLIN' DIBBS" RULES NOW APPLY!!
DIBBS? I THOUGHT WE DECIDED TO DO AWAY WITH THAT PRACTICE. IT CAUSES TOO MANY FIGHTS!!
I'M CASTING DETECT MAGIC ON THE TREASURE PILE!!
AS BRIAN'S SPELL TAKES EFFECT, A BEAUTIFUL SUIT OF PLATEMAIL LYING AMONG THE GOLD COINS BEGINS TO SHIMMER AND GLOW. LOOKS LIKE YOU JUST FOUND A +10 SUIT OF PLATEMAIL FOR A...
PLUS 10?? IS IT IN GOOD CONDITION?
DIBBS!!
THAT'S NOT FAIR. YOU DIDN'T LET HIM FINISH READING THE FLAVOR TEXT!! I WASN'T READY.
SORRY DUDE, I CALLED DIBBS!! END OF STORY. THAT PLATEMAIL IS MINE!!
DAVE'S RIGHT, BOB. HE CALLED DIBBS FIRST. SORRY.
BESIDES, YOU'RE A THIEF! YOU CAN'T EVEN WEAR PLATEMAIL, YOU DOOFUS!!
OH YEAH! I WITH-DRAW MY DIBB-CLAIM THEN.
WHAT'S THE ESTIMATED VALUE ON THAT PLATEMAIL?? ACCORDING TO HOUSE RULES, DAVE HAS TO GIVE UP SHARES OF THE TREASURE OF EQUAL VALUE OR MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE OUT OF HIS OWN POCKET!!
IT'S WORTH 75,000 GOLD PIECES!
75,000?? GEEZE LOUEEZE!! WHERE AM I GOING TO GET THAT KIND OF CASH?
I'LL GIVE YA 2,000 GOLD FOR YOUR LEGWARMERS OF SPEED!!
YOUR SHARE OF THE GIANT'S TREASURE IS ONLY 5,000 DAVE. YOU'LL HAVE TO COME UP WITH THE OTHER 70,000 UNLESS THEY AGREE TO LET YOU MAKE PAYMENTS.
SORRY DUDE, WE'D BE FOOLS TO GIVE CREDIT TO A SELF-PROFESSED CHAOTIC GOOD CHARACTER.
BUT, UH... I'LL GIVE YOU 500 FOR YOUR RING OF HEALING!!
WHAT? YOU CHISELER! C'MON, IT'S ME! EL RAVAGER!! I SAVED YOUR BUTT FROM THAT SPINY DRAGON THAT ONE TIME. REMEMBER?
GIVE YA 50 SILVER PIECES FOR YOUR HORSE!
THROW IN THE SADDLE AND I'LL GIVE YOU 100 SILVER!
TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
WELL, I GUESS I'LL CASH IN MY VANDOOGLE STOCK* TO PAY THE BALANCE. IT COST ME ALMOST EVERYTHING I OWNED TO GET IT - BUT THAT ARMOR IS MINE!!
COUPLED WITH MY HACKMASTER +12 AND BRACERS OF GIRDING, I'M GOING TO BE UNTOUCHABLE!!
OKAY B.A., I'M PUTTING ON MY ARMOR. HOW DO I LOOK??

* SEE DRAGON #248.


ACTUALLY, YOU LOOK PRETTY SILLY!! YOU CUT ME OFF BEFORE I COULD FULLY DESCRIBE THE ARMOR. IT'S GNOME SIZE!! YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY FIT INTO IT!!
I'VE WARNED YOU GUYS COUNTLESS TIMES ABOUT CUTTING ME OFF. LET THIS BE A LESSON TO YOU ALL.
PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT
USEFUL CHANTS
USEFUL NUMBERS
PIZZA MAT
HA HA!! WHAT A DORK!! THAT'LL TEACH YA TO JUMP THE GUN ON GALLIN' DIBBS!! NOW YOU'RE PENNILESS AND HAVE A SUIT OF ARMOR YOU CAN'T EVEN USE!!! HOO HOO!! THIS IS FREAKIN' HILARIOUS!!
MAYBE WE CAN HIRE A GNOME FIGHTER AND LET HIM USE THE ARMOR.
C'MON BOB, HE FEELS BAD ENOUGH.
WELL IF IT'S GNOME SIZE I DON'T WANT IT. I'M PLACING IT BACK IN THE KITTY. I WANT ALL MY STUFF BACK.
SORRY DUDE, NO TAKE BACKS!!
HEY DUDE, I THINK I MAY HAVE A SOLUTION FOR YOU. BUT IT'S GOING TO COST YOU.
HUH? C'MON! DON'T BE KIDDING AROUND AT THIS. I'M NOT IN A GOOD MOOD RIGHT NOW.
CAREFUL, DAVE. HE'LL CHEAT YOU.
NO, SERIOUSLY. I HAVE SOMETHING IN MY LITTLE BAG OF TRICKS THAT YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN. I'LL SWAP YOU FOR YOUR BRACERS OF GIRDING.
SWAP?? FOR MY BRACERS?? YER DREAMIN. IT'D HAVE TO BE SOMETHING PRETTY SPECIAL FOR ME TO GIVE UP A MAJOR RELIC.
OH IT'S JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING I PICKED UP IN MODULE J5: GNOMEWARD BOUND. INTERESTED IN A POLYMORPH TO GNOME POTION??
POLYMORPH TO GNOME POTION?? ARE YOU NUTS??
DON'T DO IT DAVE!!! IT'S NOT WORTH IT.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT BEING A GNOME IF NOBODY CAN LAY A SCRATCH ON YOU?? HUH??
HMMMMMM... GOOD POINT. LET ME THINK ON THIS FOR A MOMENT.
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...
OKAY DAVE, AS EL RAVAGER THE GNOME TURNS THE CORNER HE IS CONFRONTED BY TWO LIZARD MEN!!
AND THE PLOT THICKENS. I KNEW SOMETHING WAS ASKEW ABOUT THIS SO CALLED "ROADSIDE HEALTH SPA"
HOODY HOO!! I GIVE OUT A GNOMISH WARCRY AND UNSHEATHE MY HACKMASTER +12
I'M MOVING UP TO ENGAGE THEM AS WELL.
PREPPIN' A FIREBALL!!
I HATE TO BREAK THIS TO YOU DAVE. I KNOW YOU'VE HAD A ROUGH NIGHT AND ALL....BUT...UH...YOUR GNOME IS TOO SMALL TO WIELD A HACKMASTER SWORD.
DAMN SHAME. HEY DUDE, I'LL GIVE YA 500 GOLD FOR THE HACKMASTER +12.
I'LL GIVE YOU 700 GOLD!!
THROW IN THE SCABBARD AND A WHETSTONE AND I'LL GIVE YA 800!!

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ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Tomb of Iuchiban

A *Legend of the Five Rings** Boxed Adventure
By Rob Vaux

Black things scurry in the dead of night, and Bloodspeakers walk the earth in search of their dark Master's tomb. Do you have the courage to face the dread sorcerer Iuchiban in his hidden lair? This boxed set contains preliminary adventures, a complete map of the tomb, all the information needed to run a multi-faceted campaign deep into the heart of corruption.

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Way of Shadow: The Ninja Investigations of Kitsuki Kaagi

A *Legend of the Five Rings* Supplement
By Kitsuke Kaagi,
edited by Jennifer Mahr

Way of Shadow is the second in a series of Game Master hardcover books, following the same format used in *The Book of the Shadowlands: The Writings of Kuni Mokuna, Vol. 1.* As GMs read of Kaagi's investigations, they'll find notes and maps in the sidebars, showing how to turn the journal entries into a ninja campaign.

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A Horror Roleplaying Game
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Set in the present day, Unknown Armies offers a turbulent world of clandestine warfare and occult intrigue in which the cosmos will soon die and be reborn. Next time around, the world might be a terrible place—or it could be paradise. It's up to the player characters.

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ARMITAGE HOUSE

A Guide to the Cthulhu Cult

By Fred Pelton

A look at the notorious Cult of Cthulhu: their rituals, languages, and much more, with extensive footnotes and details. A perfect resource for *Call of Cthulhu* players.

$9.95
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ISBN 1-887797-06-8

ATLAS GAMES

Wizards' Grimoire Revised Edtion

An *Ars Magica** Game Sourcebook
by various authors

Magic reigns as the supreme power of Mythic Europe, the setting of *Ars Magica.* In addition to updating the material from the original *Wizard's Grimoire, this* edition includes information, including new templates for magi, essays illuminating topics of concern to the wizardly class, and new options for faerie magic.

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ISBN 1-887801-68-5

INDUSTRY NEWS

GAME DISTRIBUTORS MERGE

In May, Chessex Distribution and The Armory announced their merger into a new distribution company known as Alliance distribution. Their manufacturing division divisions also merged into a new company that retains the name of Chessex Manufacturing. Alliance promises retaliers "better fill rates, few packing and invoicing errors, better sales assistance, and enhanced on-line capabilities."

JEFF GRUBB RETURNS TO TSR

After several years as a freelance novelist, Jeff Grubb returned to a full-time design position at TSR in June. Best known to fans for his contributions to the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, SPELLJAMMER®, and AL-QADIM® settings, Jeff contributes his talents to new initiatives and various projects among the five TSR product groups. In his copious spare time, he'll continue writing *Magic: the Gathering** novels for the TSR book department. Jeff has relocated from Wisconsin, and is adapting to such West Coast concepts as sunbreaks, blended juices, and wraps.

LOCKWOOD HONORED BY ASFA

TSR artist Todd Lockwood received double honors from the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists when he was nominated for a Chesley Award and elected president of the organization. In the past three years, he has won two World Fantasy Awards, two WorldCon art show awards, and two Chesley Awards, named for astronomical artist Chesley Bonestell.

About his career change, Todd commented, "I languished for years in advertising, doing uninspiring and uninspired work. A lot of people told me that seeking work in another genre would be like leaping off of a north-bound train onto a south-bound jet. Somehow, I managed to miss the jet intakes and land smack in first class. I love my job, and every little kudo feels great."

BASEMENT GAME

Forge: Out of Chaos*

Fantasy Roleplaying Game Rules
By Mark Kibbe, Mike Kibbe, Paul Kibbe, Blair Hughes, Loraine Sirovy
Medieval fantasy roleplaying with great flexibility in character development and a new slant on magic.

19.95
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CHAOSIUM, INC.

Before the Fall: Innsmouth Adventures Prior to the Great Raid of 1928

A *Call of Cthulhu* Adventure
By Dula, Lay, O'Connell, Sumpter, and Szachnowski

Four dangerous adventures concerning the quaint little hamlet of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, in whose harbor the fish always seem to bite unusually well. Now keepers have new situations for investigators to bite on as well.

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FASA

BattleTech* Technical Readout: 3060

A *BatteTech* Sourcebook
By Various Authors
Armed with new BattleMechs and weapons, the Inner Sphere takes the fight to the Clans by striking at the Clan homeworlds. But the Clan forces they face also have new BattleMechs, as well as vehicles constructed with the Clans' vastly superior technology, and some other surprises. *Technical Readout: 3060* contains illustrations and complete game statistics for the latest Inner Sphere and Clan BattleMechs, tanks, hovercraft, VTOLs, new technology and more.

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Dragons are the most mysterious and magically powerful creatures in all of Barsaive. The *Dragons* sourcebook provides players and gamemasters with the secrets of Barsaive's great dragons and includes descriptions of the different types of dragons and dragon-like creatures, expanded rules for dragon magic, and adventure ideas and material for *Earthdawn* adventures.

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Renraku Arcology: Shutdown

A *Shadowrun** Adventure
By Brian Schoener and David Hyatt
The Corporate war takes a disturbing turn when Renraku's huge Seattle arcology shuts down, trapping 100,000 people inside. This adventure setting for *Shadowrun* uses the Track System first seen in the adventure set *Mob War!* – players decide who they work for and how they wish to encounter this steel prison in the heart of Seattle.

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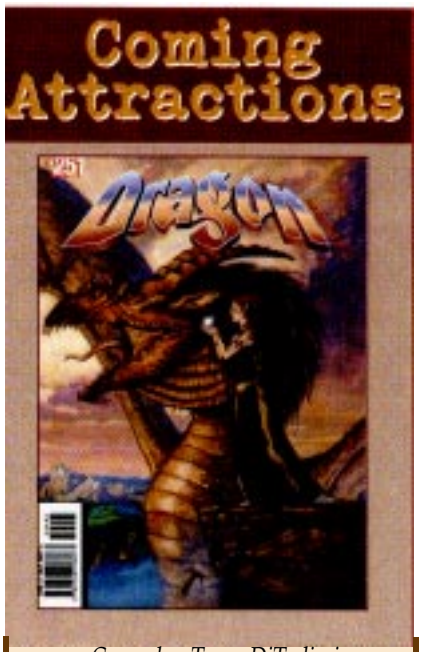
Shadowrun, Third Edition

Roleplaying Game Rules
Developed by Mike Mulvihill

Updated, revised, and improved, this popular fantasy cyberpunk game features a completely new look and feel for today's science-fiction and fantasy fan. The core rules remain essentially the same but are presented in a more user-friendly style. This revision also updates the *Shadowrun* timeline. Current sourcebooks



Cover by Tony DiTerlizzi

Knotwards & Woodsongs

By Steve Berman

New magical proficiencies and spells for the most elusive of the fair folk: the sylvan elves.

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By Miranda Horner
The dryads of Krynn have changed with the transformation of their world. Play a shaped or quested dryad, with rules for both the FIFTH AGE® and AD&D® games.

Ecology of the Wererat

By Kristin J. Johnson
For those who discover the secrets of these nasty shapechangers, life can be nasty, brutal, and *short.*

The Lizard Shoppe

Fiction by Neal Barrett, Jr.
Finn is a master craftsman of lizards, but what can he do to stop a royal assassination?

Plus "Wyrms of the North," "Forum," "DragonMirth," "Roleplaying Reviews," "Knights of the Dinner Table, "a "ProFile" on Tony DiTerlizzi, and more!

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The MARVEL and DRAGONLANCE® sections of the TSR Homepage will see some expansion this month. Fans can look for:

Marvel Game Demo: Discover the exciting new MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game, available this month. After a rules overview, you can take a look at the fate cards and hero sheets and wreak some Mighty Marvel Mayhem in our intro adventure!

Marvel Art Gallery: For the first time anywhere, you can view the new artwork created by the Marvel Bullpen specifically for the new MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game.

The DRAGONLANCE Saga Bibliography: A list of all DRAGONLANCE-related games, fiction, and comics that have appeared in official TSR products.

A Brief History of the World of Krynn: The most extensive timeline for the DRAGONLANCE Saga that we have developed so far.

A Preview of Citadel of Light: Notes on the July release about the center of mysticism at the dawn of the Age of Mortals, as well as rules that can be incorporated immediately into DRAGONLANCE campaigns.

DRAGONLANCE Quick Play Rules: An abridged version of the award-winning SAGA® game rules, suitable for players and Narrators who want something short to reference quickly during play.

GEN CON® Game Fair Preview: What SAGA, MARVEL, and DRAGONLANCE events will you find at the GEN CON Game Fair? Check the website for all the details!

and adventures will be compatible with Third Edition.

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The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen

A Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook
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By Anthony Ragan

Marienburg is the largest and most corrupt port in the Old World. This book covers its history, government, trade, and underworld and details all its most interesting locations and characters, from the sea-elf enclave to the deadly docksides. Includes a poster-map.

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This is what you've been waiting for, the Big Secret we've been hinting at since 1996: the companion game to the award-winning *Deadlands* game! It's a whole new setting.

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NOTICE

The "Sixguns & Sesheyans" article in issue #249 included the term "Weird West," a trademark of Pinnacle Entertainment Group. The use of the term was not intended as a challenge to the trademark. Our apologies to Pinnacle for the mistake.

Worms!

A *Deadlands* Adventure and Story
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The seventh in our popular series of *Dime Novels* for *Deadlands* takes our heroes to the salt flats outside of the City o' Gloom. The first half of this 64-page, digest-sized book is fiction; the second is an adventure based upon the fiction.

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The ALTERNITY® section of the website continues to grow. We've added:

Mark Friedlander's Character Generator: Allows players and GMs alike to create new heroes or supporting cast members quickly and efficiently.

David Meacham's Star System Generator: A very handy program for creating new star systems using the GRAPH system from the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide.*

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This boxed set includes extensive history on the Calimshan area, from the ancient genie empires of Calim and Memnon to the rise and fall of the malefic Shoon Empire. Explore the mysteries of Lake of Steam and the Lands of the Lions, and create a new magic!

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By Mark Hunter, Steve Kenson, Ian Lemke, Nicky Rea, and Nancy Schultz-Yetter

This sourcebook picks up where the *Changeling* rulebook leaves off and offers a plethora of new information, from rules clarifications to new and advanced systems for handling fae magic. Included are new settings and new rules for expanding the boundaries of your Changeling chronicle.

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Darkness Revealed: Passage Through Shadow

A *Trinity** Adventure
By Bruce Baugh and Richard E. Dansky

Second of the three-part Darkness Revealed adventure series for Trinity. This book details three major scenarios that Storytellers may run as an ongoing series, or as part of their own epics. *Passage Through Shadow* also contains useful setting information, as well as dynamic characters and equipment for all Trinity Storytellers.

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Profiles

TRACY HICKMAN

The co-creator of DRAGONLANCE®

and author of this issue's short story, "Dedrak's Quest," is now conjuring the new science-fantasy Starshield project—and you can help.

by Allen Varney

At TSR in the early '80s Tracy Raye Hickman conceived "Project Overlord," a novel and three modules that grew into the first DRAGONLANCE® trilogy (by Margaret Weis and Hickman) and 15 companion modules. So you'd expect Hickman to think big. How big is he thinking nowadays? You can't imagine.

On his handsome World Wide Web site (www.trhickman.com), Hickman offers his autobiography: born in Salt Lake City, 1955; Mormon mission to Hawaii and Indonesia, 1975-77; married childhood sweetheart Laura Curtis, 1977; joined TSR, 1981; DRAGONLANCE, 1985; left TSR, 1987; over 30 novels in collaboration with Weis; solo author of *Requiem of Stars* and *The Immortals,* 1996; now lives with his wife and four children in St. George, Utah.

There Hickman also hints at new DRAGONLANCE developments, now that he and Weis are working on a new trilogy. Even in interviews, he won't let slip more than hints. "The plot for the new trilogy is perhaps the most top-secret thing we've ever done," he says. It's "a story of what *really* happened to Krynn... a dark and sinister secret."

Hickman is more forthcoming about his other work: "I still believe the original *Ravenloft* modules [1983, '86, with Laura Hickman] were perhaps the best that ever had my name on them. We played that module every Halloween for about five years before committing it to print." Then there's his novel *The Immortals* (Roc, 1996), a near-future cautionary tale about AIDS concentration camps in Utah: "I was absolutely driven to write that book. I was able to say many things that I felt strongly about and still do. It is perhaps my finest work."

On his Web site, he also expresses principled views in his essay "Ethics in Fantasy: Morality and D&D," required reading for any game designer: "Fantasy is not escapist fiction; it is a morally based genre. Good fantasy demands ethics, and good fantasy roleplaying demands ethical design. Basing a fantasy world or character on evil is lazy; it's a cop-out. Creating a fantasy world that requires true heroism may not be as easy-but it's a whole lot more fun."

Lately Hickman has been having fun—and thinking very big-with the Starshield Project, a science-fantasy shared world he created with Weis. Del Rey Books has published the first Starshield novels, *Sentinels* (later retitled *Mantle of Kendis-Dai)* and *Nightsword,* and Hickman has returned to the setting for this issue's story, "Dedrak's Quest."

"Starshield is a universe where a society of dragons can confront blaster-armed spacemen or wizards wielding magic staves with computer targeting," Hickman explains. For this issue's tale, "I wanted to do a twist on the old 'knight hunts monstrous dragon' story. Dedrak, the dragon in the story, is a major character in the second novel."

The Starshield project "grew out of my desire to share the creation process with all our fans. Many of the ideas, worlds, and creations submitted by our citizens find their way into our novels. Everyone whose material is used gets credit and a chance to participate in profits from online sales of their adventures.

"We are very excited with the new WebRPG site." Anyone can freely download both the first novel and a massive *Starshield* roleplaying game. "Simply go to starshield.webrpg.com, and we'll grant you a handful of stars."

Though the site doesn't actively promote it, Hickman proudly discusses Starshield's ultimate purpose, his biggest dream yet: to finance a permanent colony on Mars by the year 2010. "From the development of a commercial space plane, an orbital platform, long-term life sciences, dependable interplanetary transport vehicles, to the colonization itself-we dare to dream this dream," says a mission statement. "My idea is to take the creative energy we put into entertainment and channel it toward a real-world goal."

This visionary project has historical precedent. For instance rocketry pioneers Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Hermann Oberth both financed early experiments with audaciously speculative books. Whether or not the Starshield Project does the same, Hickman, like any big thinker, considers the effort itself vital: "Whether we make it to Mars may not be as important as that we honestly, courageously tried."

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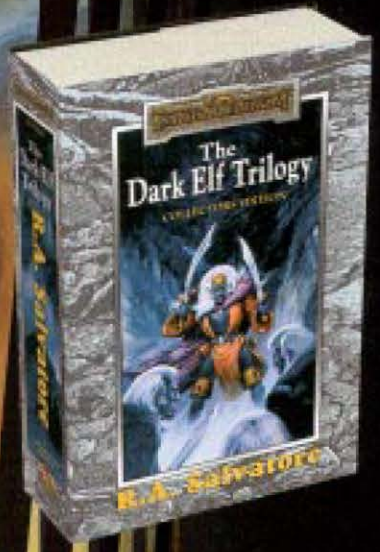

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